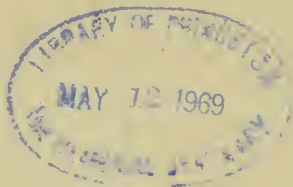




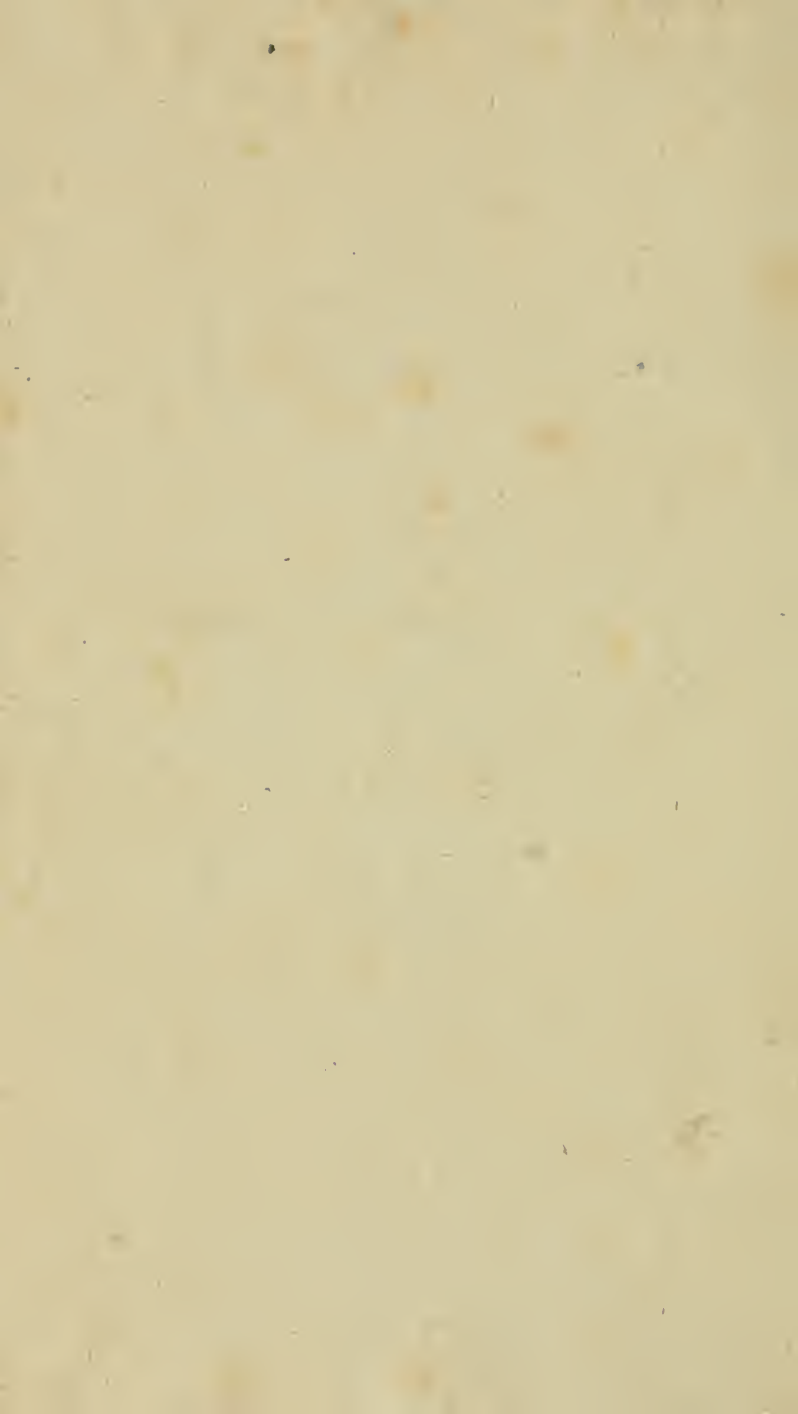
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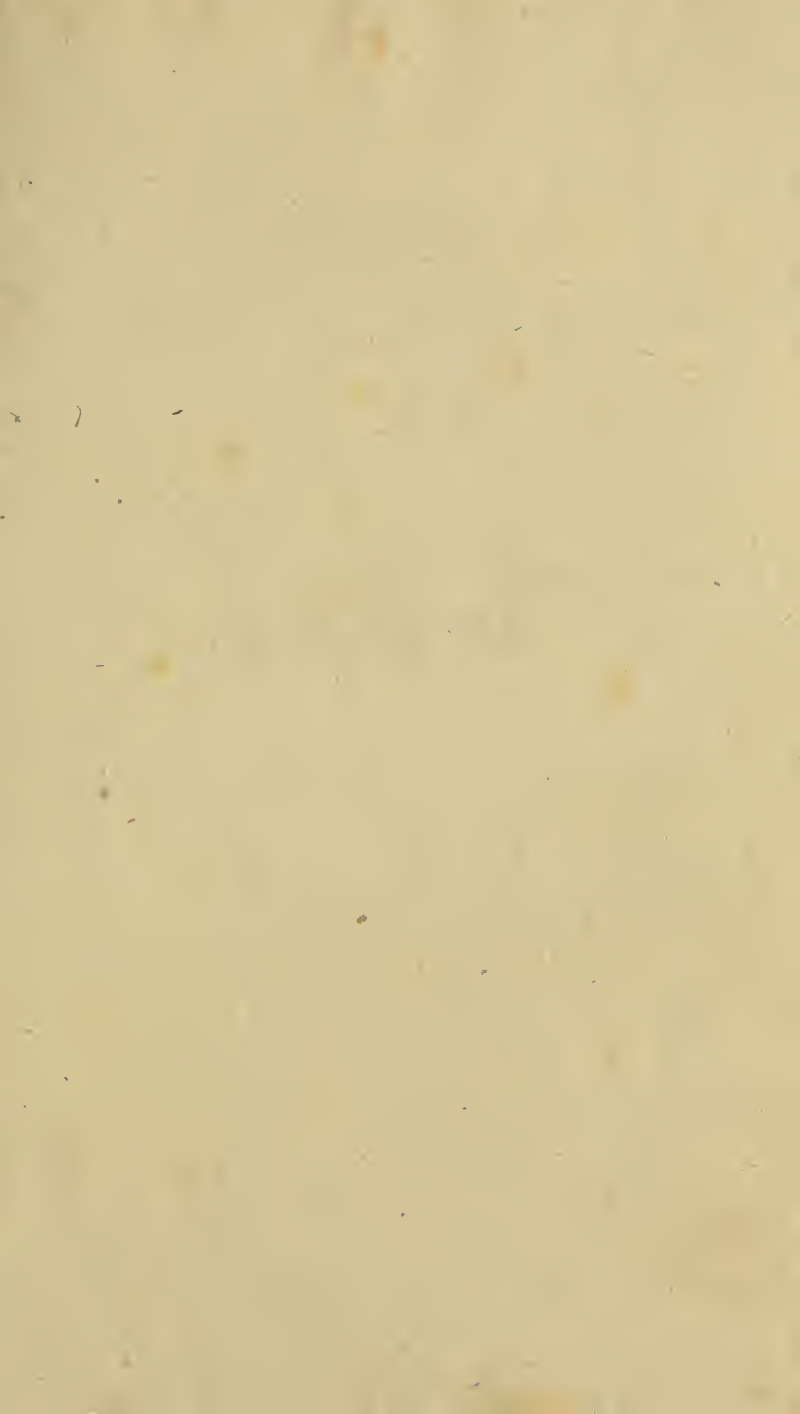


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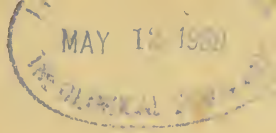




SERMONS.



Burgie - L 5. 15



# SERMONS

BY THE

*REV. JOHN WIGHT WICKES, M.A.*

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF CUMBERLAND.

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LONDON:

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1801.



## DEDICATION.

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TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
ERNEST AUGUSTUS DUKE OF CUMBERLAND,  
KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER,  
    &c. &c. &c.

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S I R,

**ACTUATED** by every motive of profound respect, of personal attachment, and unfeigned duty to Your Royal Highness, the sentiment of Gratitude calls upon language to convey the dictates of the heart. But language is inadequate to do justice to the feelings of an overflowing mind. The genuine sensations of real Gratitude, like the most refined pleasure of real Benevolence, cannot be expressed—they can only be felt.

## DEDICATION.

*The task of speaking thankfully, though delightful in itself, becomes delicately difficult from a nicety of apprehension, which seeks to avoid disgust, by excess ; and disrespect, by coolness of terms. Fearful of incurring your Royal Highness's displeasure by any thing like intrusive officiousness, and at the same time solicitous not to deserve it by merited imputation, timidity overpowers the ardency of inclination, and the dictates of a grateful heart give way, with reluctance, to a paramount sense of duty.*

*Few occasions present themselves, by which men in the humbler walks of life can pay the tribute of particular respect to their superiors of illustrious rank. So that what will ever be deemed the highest satisfaction derivable from a publication to which I am permitted to affix your Royal Highness's name is the favourable opportunity which it affords me of dedicating a volume to your Royal Highness, as a test of undisguised sincerity ; and of asserting with the most explicit declaration of truth, in the most*



## DEDICATION.

*public manner, that the welfare and happiness and unsullied prosperity of Your Royal Highness, are no less the continued object of my wishes, than they are faithfully the constant subject of my prayers.*

*Permit me, Sir, to subscribe myself, with every mark of respect, of duty, and of gratitude,*

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

*Most devoted, most obedient, and  
most humble Servant and Chaplain,*

J. W. WICKES.

*London, June 8, 1801.*



## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HE publication of Sermons, after the recent display of learning exhibited in the works of so many well-approved modern Divines, must no doubt be accounted a bold undertaking. It may rightly be denominated, “*periculosæ opus plenum aleæ*,” exposing the writer to certain danger; when, if he had been guided by the dictates of pusillanimous caution, he might have ensured his safety, by continuing under the covert of inglorious obscurity.

In presenting an additional volume to the world, an excuse is naturally expected, as a justification of what may be deemed rashness by some; and supposed to be vanity by others. Nor is it unusual to adduce

a favourite motive, as a defence against such common imputations. Admitting the propriety of the former term in a limited sense only, but disallowing the latter supposition altogether, curiosity may be satisfied by the perusal of the preceding Dedication, in which the strongest inducement is candidly acknowledged. “ *Ista veritas, etiam* “ *si jucunda non est; auctori, tamen grata* “ *est.*”

Were the Discourses insignificant in their subject, no apology for intrusion should be deemed sufficient. Were they trifling in themselves, censure would affix its stigma with justice. Were they compositions of fancy, the author would do well to attempt their favourable reception, by declarations of humility; or seek refuge from censure, by a diffident appeal to the candour of the public. Such, however, is not the case.—The doctrines contained in this volume are interesting and serious; their moral applications are sanctioned by the decisions of truth; and the authority from whence they

are deduced is unquestionable—incontrovertible—undeniable.

An expectation of profit, arising from the publication of Sermons, might be vain and delusory. It is not the fashion of the day to seek them with avidity; nor the custom of the times to read them with rapture.—Neither flattered by popularity, nor recommended by externals, the author can have little of profit to expect, from prejudice in his favour; and less of attention to anticipate, from professional appendages to his name. The appointment which he fills in the household of a most amiable Prince, though it may not give celebrity to secondary talents, affords an internal satisfaction of mind more than equal to any publicity of character. Should presumption be alleged against him, he disavows the justice of the sentence. Should a want of originality be adduced as a cause for censure,—with patient acquiescence he admits the accusation. Who will dispute the equity of such an award? Yet it must be

allowed that some things may have the appearance of novelty, from the very form in which they are presented to the public eye; and others, by a strong though faithful representation of facts, too often lamented, but too little regarded, may arrest attention, as if new in their subject, and original in the mode of discussion.

Many points of relative consideration, connected with the immediate subject of a discourse, are necessarily omitted in the delivery, from a regard to the time customarily allowed to the preacher. But *in publishing*, such mutilation is unnecessary. A volume may be entirely laid aside, or suitable opportunities may be embraced for the perusal of it. The author is confined to no limits, and the reader has full liberty of using his own discretion. The omissions in the pulpit are introduced by the press, without inconvenience to the *former*; whilst the *latter* is possessed of a free privilege, to curtail at his own pleasure. These remarks are especially applicable to the Ordination

Sermon. The subject is copious in itself; and much latitude may fairly be allowed, when the interest of religion is materially connected with the respectability of professional character; when the welfare of society is in a great degree concerned in the residence of the clergy, the well-directed management of the churches, and in general to whatever has regard to clerical duties, in the several departments of the order. It would be an act of injustice to well-merited admiration, for a well-intended plan, not to mention the *free church* at Bath: It reflects the highest honour upon the original proposers, from its general utility, in accommodating every description of persons, without regard to wealth, to honours, or distinction: It bespeaks a liberality of sentiment, worthy of imitation in the extensive parishes of the metropolis, where Benevolence and Charity are conspicuous and unbounded.—*Si quid novisti rectius, candidus imperti.*

In speaking of the Sermons themselves,



it may be sufficient to observe, that the many testimonies of high approbation bestowed upon the first may be accounted a reason why it should form part of the collection.—The second is not introduced without much delightful emotion. The opportunity of complying with the commands of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, in writing a Discourse upon a particular occasion, were not received with less pleasure than they were truly embraced with dutiful readiness of will; and the impression made upon the minds of the loyal sailors in the Cambrian, by the gracious condescension of his Royal Highness, in attending in person at the time it was delivered, will never be effaced from their memory. They must ever remember the royal visit with gratitude; nor can they ever forget their *own* duty, whenever they reflect upon the high example of devotion exhibited on their *own* deck, by a Son of their beloved Sovereign.—The remembrance is grateful to the author.



The re-publication of a single Discourse which has once been submitted to the public tribunal may be fairly allowable upon the principle of sincere friendship. It is again respectfully inscribed with additional pleasure, as a testimony of the author's esteem for private virtues, and for public integrity. *Animus, non sermo*, must plead for indulgence.—Of the others, little may be said but what diffidence may speak, and moderate candour allow. They are doctrinal—practical—moral; written upon various occasions. They are presented to the world with the same earnest inclination of doing good, as induced the preacher to consult usefulness in discussion, rather than brilliancy of composition; and to consider the effect they might be likely to produce upon the minds of the *many*, in preference to any ostentatious display of scholastic learning, or ingenious speculation, which might amuse the fancies of the *few*. Depth of erudition and sublimity of language are by no means professed; disquisitions of philosophy, and abstruseness of meta-

physical argument, are totally disclaimed. The acute reasoning of the theologist, and the persuasive eloquence of the rhetorician, form no part of their character;—the pen of a Horseley, or of a Porteus, can be held by few. But though the author bows with reverence to the possessors of such transcendent abilities, he feels proud in the opportunity of declaring, that in the duties of his profession, in gratitude to his Maker, in loyalty to his Sovereign, in love to his country, and in good wishes to all mankind, it is his ambition to follow their example.

The minds of all men are not equally strong. Some are limited, some are capacious; but by a right application of talents, each may be serviceable,—all may be rendered instrumental of some good to mankind. Though science might have enlightened the topics of these discourses with greater brilliancy of thought, or illumined the doctrines they contain with the choicest ornaments of classical learning, yet the

light of an inferior constellation will sometimes direct a wandering traveller in the way, when the blaze of meridian splendor may not unfrequently dazzle the sight by excess of brightness. Should we argue from analogy, the skill of the physician is discernible by the judgment with which he prescribes the appropriate medicine effective of health to the various and opposite constitutions of his patients: and no less discrimination should be attended to by the clergy, in adapting their instructions to the people, by the means of multifarious application, suitable to the different capacities of those whose improvement they are zealous to advance; nor should they, from vanity or conceit, look upon their reputation as scholars as equal to their duty as Christians and professional teachers. The truths of Christianity, and the maxims of moral virtue, are plain in themselves, and should be taught with plainness; since it is of more real consequence to society to render one individual a better man, by the infusion of good principles, than learnedly to

display an extent of erudition, by the discussion of intricate points, which the faculties of the mind are seldom enabled to understand.

Here the author puts in his claim for candour, which is never disallowed when the intentions are upright and good. He seeks not the admiration of the learned, but hopes to deserve the attention of the less informed. He courts not the applause of any, but covets the approbation of all. He is neither too proud to refuse instruction from others, nor so humble as to suppose that his own advice will be rejected with scorn. The subjects written upon have been considered with seriousness; they are recommended with earnestness; they are strenuously enforced by the strongest of arguments—an appeal to the judgment as well as to the heart. Nor will it be denied by the real philanthropist, that to bind up the wounds of the afflicted,—to dissipate the gloom of the desponding—to alleviate the calamities of the distressed—and to confirm

all men in the belief of a superintending Providence, and the certainty of a future life, is of less advantage to society than to combat the speculations of abstruse philosophy, or to seek after wisdom in the refinements of complex disquisition.

Whatever may be the merit of the Discourses, or whatever their defects, they are consigned to the world with some degree of anxiety, but with little of dread. Extreme apprehension is dissipated by the conviction of that liberal sentiment which has so long prevailed at the fountain of literature. The lash of the censor is seldom used with severity, unless presuming ignorance, or unwarrantable licentiousness, provoke such correction. An attempt to inspire a spirit of loyalty, by awakening a spirit of religion,—and to promote the general happiness of man, by the recommendation of general virtue,—is never repaid by contumely, though the powers of the mind may in some instances be inadequate to so delightful a task. And it is but common

justice to affirm, that professional industry is never wantonly destroyed by too great a nicety of criticism; nor is the desire of doing good cruelly repulsed with censure and ill-deserved animadversion.

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## SERMON I.

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2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

WHO HATH ABOLISHED DEATH, AND HATH BROUGHT  
LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE  
GOSPEL.

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THE desire of happiness being inherent in our nature, and the continuance of it the object of our most ardent solicitation, whatever tends to enliven the mind with hope, or justify the expectation of endless felicity, cannot but enhance the comforts of life, and mitigate the sorrows of momentary affliction.

The belief of a Superior Being, represented under some denomination or symbol, has been acknowledged by every nation and country hitherto explored. No historian

can be named who does not admit the fact; no navigator who does not assert it: the truth is evinced by the agreement of each; and the veracity of both is corroborated by the testimony of successive observation.

Had the universe been the effect of chance, and the beauties of it arisen from the fortuitous assemblage of contending atoms, the mutual concurrence of mankind to the contrary would not so generally have obtained: and, as universal error can never be supposed, we might rely upon this argument alone, as sufficient to establish the fundamental doctrine of all religion,—“ that  
“ there is a God.”

Should we accede to this first proposition, which may not improperly be termed self-evident, we cannot but allow the various attributes affixed to the Deity, by which he may be denominated the very essence of all perfection; and from hence infer the certainty of his exercising a superintending providence over the world, with the same

degree of credibility as we believe him the Creator of it:—" verily, then, there is a  
 " God that judgeth the earth."

Omitting to survey the endless varieties of the Almighty's goodness, so wonderful in their respective classes, or to wander through the field of nature, and trace the connexion between one part of the universe and another, we may select the most prominent feature in this lower world as a subject worthy our discussion; and, whilst we consider the peculiar privileges extended to the human race, argue the *necessity* of a future state, as well from the conclusions of natural reason, as the *assurance* of it from the evidence of divine revelation.

Man, in his outward form erect, bold, and majestic; endued with speech, with reason, with understanding; with every perceptive faculty of discrimination and judgment; furnished with every qualification by which life may be rendered comfortable; bespeaks a character of no little im-

portance: his pre-eminence in the scale of beings; the dignity of his deportment; the elevation of his mind; the superiority of his intellect, seem naturally to assign him a far more decided interest in the world than merely to exist, and to die.

From the earliest ages anterior to revelation, from the first period of rational inquiry, there appears to have been some faint intimation that human life would be renewed in another state beyond the present; nor was the presumption of such an event rendered improbable by the strong repugnance to annihilation observable in the nature of man.

The uniform regularity subsisting in the world gave the rational idea of a superintending Being, by whom such order was directed; and as this idea became strengthened by the further expansion of the human intellect, the apparent discord among men, why virtue should be so often depressed, and vice become triumphant; why calamity

should befall the innocent, and success so frequently attend the guilty, gave rise to an almost necessary deduction, that this life must be a state of probation only, whilst complete retribution would take place in some future period of existence.

The arguments in favour of such an opinion, however plausible and rational, were by no means conclusive; they were probable indeed, though speculative; they were consolatory, though abstruse; they rendered afflictions less grievous, and misery more supportable, by their natural tendency to inspire the mind with expectation of an eventual change.

Such were the surmises of heathen philosophers, who calculated the probability there was of man's surviving death, from that ardent desire after happiness, which they found by experience unattainable upon earth; nor had the Jews much stronger indications of a future state.



The religion of nature, seeing, as it were, through a glass darkly, in the glimmering light of uncertainty, pointed out an hereafter; and the revelation of God, by Moses, faintly shadowed out its glories by the typical allusion of a land of promise.

But still some further communications were necessary to resolve these difficulties; some sanction more explicit to cheer the despondency of man; some authority more unquestionable than the mere speculations of the philosopher, or the dark insinuations of the Mosaic law; some stronger evidence was wanted to relieve the mind from suspense, and to strike conviction by the testimony of unequivocal assurance.

In the fullness of time, therefore, predetermined by the wisdom of God, the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings, and dissipated the darkness in which the world had so long been involved. The veil, which, for so many ages, hung over eternity, was removed; grace and truth



were revealed by Jesus Christ, the long predicted Messiah; the cloud of ignorance was dispelled by the brightest beams of charity; death was abolished; and life and immortality brought to light, through the Gospel.

Whatever discovery might have been made by philosophy; whatever degree of knowledge the heathens of old might have acquired by the researches of natural reason, or the Jews attained by the study of the Mosaic law, Christians at this day enjoy in a more abundant manner by the promulgation of a new and everlasting covenant. To us are handed down those sacred oracles delivered to the prophets and patriarchs of old; to us is superadded the attestation of a new religion, free from typical allusions, and unburdened with pompous ceremonies and rites.

In the *New Testament* a dispensation of mercy is unfolded; a Redeemer is announced; the certainty of a future state ascertain-

ed; and a day of retribution most positively declared. We now contemplate the goodness of the Deity in the offers of grace, as well as in the works of nature; we now hear him speak plainly of immortality in the words of his Son, whilst the whispers of conscience are enforced by the impression. The ways of life and the ways of death are set before us; and, as a means to the most desirable end, we are assuredly told that faith and repentance can alone be effective of salvation: and, as we regard our tranquillity in this life, or expect happiness in the next, we are directed, by the force of energetic wisdom, to have a lively hope in Jesus Christ, to fear God, and keep his commandments.

Were we to take a view of the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, without prejudice and without pride, we should find it in every respect pure and perfect—worthy of God to give, and deserving the gratitude of man to receive; in its doctrines, rational and sublime; in its commands, humane and be-

neficent; in its positive institutions, simple and significative; in its worship, spiritual and consoling; in its threat for disobedience, equitable and just; in its promises of reward, merciful and gracious;—*here* we have hope under all our tribulations;—*here* we have refuge under all our afflictions.—“Come unto me,” says the divine author of Christianity, “come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” A ray of heavenly joy darts upon the humble penitent, and brings comfort unto the meek in spirit; a scene of glory opens to our view; the benefits of redeeming grace are clearly pointed out; life and immortality are brought to light by evidence the most incontestable, incontrovertible, unequivocal.

As the tenets of the Sadducee have again been referred to by the infidel, and the speculative niceties of the sceptic seem to have revived in the wild effusions of modern philosophy, it may not be an useless task to consider the suggestions of natural reason itself, as agreeing with the truth of divine re-

velation, which establishes the doctrine of a future life.

The prolongation of human existence beyond the grave has ever been a subject exercising the faculties of man. The desire of immortality seems implanted in our being, and interwoven with our system; reason prompts us to the expectation, and Christianity has confirmed the suggestions of our natural feelings. Upon the truth of this doctrine stands the foundation of all morality and virtue, the propriety of religion, and the certainty of that happiness we are so eager to obtain. But if, O miserable philosophy! if death was an eternal sleep; if death dropped the curtain between this life and eternity; if the consoling doctrines of revelation were proved fanciful and uncertain, the dream of phrensy, or the compilation of pre-concerted design, how dreary would be the long journey of the unfortunate, the helpless, and the forsaken!

If death was an eternal sleep, in vain

should we torment ourselves with fear ; useless would be the reproaches of an inward monitor ; in vain should we suffer the impulse of passion to be corrected by a sense of duty, or the violence of any sensual inclination to be restrained by the precepts of religion : fruitless the task to represent those joys we could not attain, or direct those means we could not execute.

If death was an eternal sleep, where should we find motives sufficient to curb the tyranny of the powerful, to check the impetuous sallies of the licentious, or pacify the feelings of the injured and oppressed ? Where would arguments be deduced strong enough to correct the irregularities of desire ; to support the innocent in distress ; to mitigate the sorrows of the poor ; to cheer the wounded heart of the afflicted, or comfort the dejected, the desponding, and the miserable ? If there was no expectation of another life ; if no hopes of retribution, when all things shall be adjusted by the rules of equity and truth ; if



no dread of future punishment, or certainty of future reward, morality would be undermined by vice ; reason be subdued by passion ; and, man opposed against man, nought could appease the conflict of contending malice, cruelty, and revenge. Were such the case, miserable indeed would be the lot of humanity.

But if the spirit, that immaterial and better part of us, must return again to God that gave it ; if life and immortality are clearly brought to light, *and there is to be* a resurrection of the just and of the unjust ; if we *are* to exist in a future state, and stand accountable for our actions at the bar of justice ; if the oppressor and the oppressed, the persecutor and the persecuted, the evil and the good, shall each be called into judgment to receive his final sentence ;— here we have inducements sufficient to promote every virtuous action, and to check every vicious inclination ; the strongest incitements to benevolence and charity among the rich ; the most powerful per-

suation to patience and order and resignation among the poor ; the momentary sufferings of humanity are lost in the pleasing expectation of future happiness ; and the wretchedness of this life becomes less painful by the certain assurance of that blissful state which shall be the portion of the faithful in the next.

If then the thoughts of immortality are so natural, so interesting, and so comfortable ; if the doctrine of eternal sleep is so wretched and unconsoling ; how favourable a reception does the religion of Christ demand, which strongly contradicts the one, and positively declares the certainty of the other,—which asserts, in the most unequivocal terms, that “ We shall not all sleep, “ but we shall *all* be changed ;—that the “ dead shall be raised incorruptible ; and “ that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality : ” — “ That we must *all* appear “ before the judgment-seat of Christ, that “ every one may receive the things done

“ in his body, according to that he hath  
 “ done, whether it be good or bad ; and  
 “ that in those days the wicked shall flee  
 “ from death, and shall desire to die, and  
 “ death shall flee from them.”

A deficiency of evidence then can never be alleged against the truths of Christianity ; nor can the disbeliever resist its doctrines for want of those proofs by which its divine origin is attested. In the course of temporal concerns, we seldom refuse our assent to any thing affirmed, when the probability of the circumstance itself is sanctioned by the allowed veracity of the person affirming it. And, if such be the usual mode of conviction in the common incidents of life, it must betray no small degree of inconsistency to deny the consolidated testimony of mankind, and the stronger assurances of revelation itself, in a case where our future happiness or future misery depends upon the sincerity of our faith.

To cut off every temptation to pride, and



to inculcate humility, which is the foundation of every virtuous superstructure, we are instructed in man's original delinquency, and his forfeiture of happiness consequent thereupon:—to enlarge our views, and animate our hopes, we are authoritatively informed of man's redemption; and taught the expediency of trusting in the goodness of the Almighty, and the necessity of imploring his especial aid to co-operate with our best endeavours:—to cheer us in despondency, and to alleviate the afflictions incident to our nature, we are encouraged with the prospect of future rewards, and assured by revelation that death is *not* an eternal sleep; that the soul is immortal; that there is a connection between this life and another; that *this* is a state of probation only, in which we are preparing, by the different trials of our faith, for the completion of eternal happiness. To stimulate our gratitude, and promote our earnestness and zeal, we are directed to the use of those means prescribed by the Gospel, by which

we may insure the approbation of our Maker and our Judge.

With those whose principles are depraved by the philosophy of the infidel, and upon whose long indulged vices the doctrine of eternal sleep acts as an opiate to the distempered body, the doctrines of Christianity can have no influence. The unhappy disciples of the atheist, who, to palliate their enormities, refer all things to the immediate effect of inevitable necessity,—who, to check the feelings of remorse, and stifle the dictates of an accusing conscience, speak aloud of annihilation, and, with the Epicureans, cry out, “Let us eat and drink, “for to-morrow we die!”—such men will not listen to the words of wisdom; or reflect upon the dangers of their infatuation. By such men the scheme of redemption may be deemed an idle fable, since they close their eyes against conviction; they make a mock at sin; they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

But, to the considerate mind, much consolation is derivable from the pleasures of religious confidence;—much cause of rejoicing, from the prospect of eternity.—To *those* who, knowing better things, have hope in Christ that there *shall* be a resurrection of the just and of the unjust; and who, believing firmly in the promises of the Gospel, conform to the precepts which it enjoins;—to *such* the doctrines of Christianity are replete with joy, and effective of inward satisfaction:—and may they continue stedfast to the end, and evince the effects of their belief by practical goodness, and the positive works of persevering obedience !

But as the capacity of happiness depends upon the disposition of the mind,—and such as are the inclinations, such must be also the pleasures of man;—the promises of the Gospel depending upon the purity of the heart, can afford no pleasure to the impure, the sensual, and the malicious ;

whilst to the humble, the upright, and the meek-spirited, the hopes of immortality are the sources of endless satisfaction. To the persevering energy of the obedient and the faithful, joyous must be the expectation of a spiritual existence ;—where an eternity of bliss shall reward their patient well-doing, and a crown of glory shall be the recompense for their tribulation, their labour, and their afflictions.

Christianity then has dispelled the mists of heathenism, and cleared away the errors in which natural reason was involved ; Christianity has superseded the darkness of the law by lifting up the veil of obscurity, and removed the scruples of doubt by the clearest conviction and assurance ; life and immortality are now brought to light through the Gospel. To all our natural advantages Christianity has superadded new power and strength ; it urges the necessity of obedience to the will of God, and makes known that will in terms the most

plain, the most simple, the most familiar; nor is this *all*: Whilst it alleviates the miseries, it enhances the pleasures of life; and, whilst it holds forth the certainty of future bliss, it no less contributes to our happiness in the present finite period of our existence.

In the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, mankind had general hopes of redemption; some distant expectation of a future life intimated by types, rather than assured by certainty; and as many of the predictions were mysteriously adapted to double interpretations, so were they miraculously effective of increasing good, whilst their uniform tendency to one great and splendid event was not ultimately ascertained till the sceptre departed from Judah, and Shiloh came. The Jewish law was then abrogated by the introduction of a new covenant; the Redeemer of the world made his appearance in the flesh; instituted a more perfect religion; gave general



rules of conduct and behaviour ; died for our sins, rose again for our justification ; promised the assistance of his Holy Spirit to further our endeavours ; and ascended into heaven as a mediator and advocate and intercessor for all men.

How much soever the proud disputer of this world may be disposed to question the authority of Gospel-revelation upon the principles of sceptical refinement, yet will the origin of our religion still prove its authenticity, and its reasonableness justify our belief of it ; the mildness of its precepts bespeaks the benevolence of its divine author, and the doctrine it inculcates evinces the truth of his mission ; its intrinsic value proves it, beyond contradiction, “ worthy of all acceptation,” since it is profitable to all men, as containing not only the promise of this life, but the certain assurance of that which is to come.

Surely then such a dispensation claims

our most serious reflection ; such a system, so benevolent in its design, so happy in its consequences, so certain in its effects, merits not contempt : such a religion, revealed from heaven, stamped with divine wisdom, proved by prophecies, established by miracles, extending its beneficial influence by every testimony of internal and external evidence as to its truth and authenticity and sacred origin, deserves at least a candid inquiry, and dispassionate consideration :—a mind ingenuous, unprejudiced, unsophisticated, open to conviction. Be not deceived then ; let no man beguile you with enticing words ; whatever the scoffs of the impious, or the folly of the atheist ; whatever their tenets, or whatever their maxims, we have a God to serve,—we have a soul to save :—let not your faith be shaken by the specious arguments of the profane, nor the bold infidelity of the blasphemer ; let not the boasting of philosophy supersede the truth of divine revelation ; nor the lively hopes of eternal bliss

be darkened by the cheerless prospect of annihilation.—Life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel;—nor is it less our interest than our duty to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.



## SERMON II.

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### PROVERBS ii. 21.

THE WAYS OF MAN ARE BEFORE THE EYES OF THE  
LORD, AND HE PONDERETH ALL HIS GOINGS.

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THE book of Proverbs consists of a collection of short sententious sayings, moral and divine; partly collected and partly composed by Solomon, the wisest of men.

The text, as one among a numerous assemblage of just and elegant observations, contains a doctrine deduced from reason, and supported by the incontestable evidence of revealed truth; it asserts the omnipresence and omniscience of the Divine Nature, and the agency of his providence in the government of the world: and, to convey some appropriate ideas by which such transcendent attributes may be par-

tially understood, the universal power and knowledge of the Deity are expressed in the accommodating terms of the most simple language, as best adapted to the finite comprehension of human intellect:—"The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings."

It is the glorious prerogative and attribute of God to behold at one view all things present, past, and to come:—"He spieth out all our ways, and every creature is manifest in his sight." As the sun in the firmament sheddeth forth his beams, and giveth warmth to universal nature, so nothing can withstand the effulgence of the Godhead; nothing resist the emanations of his glory; nothing can escape the penetrating search of his omniscience. By the eye of faith we behold Him filling all space, and reaching beyond the utmost extent of imagination, till we are lost in the unfathomable abyss of his immensity: Nor does the Fountain of all Life remain an unconcerned spectator in the moral government of the world.

As the skilful architect erects the building magnificent and commodious; as the wary pilot conducts the ship with safety through the storm; as the prudent general commands his army with foresight, with order, and with success; so the wise Author of Nature superintends every motion of the universe, and directs his operations with uniform consistency, with harmony and design. Every thing proclaims his knowledge; his wisdom is unerring; his power invincible; his glory inconceivable; his goodness immeasurable. He controuls the jarring elements, and nature obeys his voice. He regards every thought of the human heart, and takes cognisance of the actions of his creatures:—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Let all the earth, therefore, fear the Lord; for He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

When man is regarded in his moral capacity, formed in the image of his Maker; endued with faculties of understanding, and

capable of discerning between good and evil; when we reflect that his Almighty Creator gave him dominion over the creatures of this lower world; put all things in subjection to him; nature acknowledging the superiority of his reason, and Providence protecting him from injury and harm; surely we must conclude, that this favourite of heaven, this pride of the earth, was born for other purposes than to revel in the beauties of creation only; to riot in all the luxuries of sense, unnoticed and disregarded; his conduct overlooked, and his ways neglected by the Author of his Being. *Such* could not be the intention of his Maker. Lord of this lower world, he is God's peculiar care; his existence closes not with this life. Death is not an *eternal sleep*, by which the vital principle is annihilated and destroyed; neither is a state of future and everlasting happiness pre-ordained as the necessary *unconditional* result of Almighty goodness. Man is placed in a state of probation *here*, and will be accountable for his actions *hereafter*. The Sovereign Disposer of events

hath instituted ordinances he is bound to observe; He hath afforded him precepts he is enjoined to comply with; He hath given him reason to regulate his passions, and afforded him strength to resist the impetuosity of his nature:—"This do, and thou shalt live," comes from an authority not to be disputed. God hath revealed his will, which can never be disobeyed with impunity. He hath offered salvation upon the most gracious terms, and the breach of his covenant becomes destructive of happiness. No cunning can evade his omniscience, no iniquity shall escape the omnipotence of his arm. "He cannot, will not be mocked; "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

However unequal the dispensations of Providence may now appear; however irreconcilable to the finite capacity of man, why *here* so much superfluity of temporal

comfort should exist, and *there* no less penury and distress; that one should be elevated to the highest rank which human grandeur can devise, whilst thousands glide down the stream of life, unnoticed and unknown—However discordant, and seemingly unjust such an œconomy may appear to the partial discernment of man, whose intellect is limited, and whose judgment is prejudiced, yet the wisdom of the Almighty should never be arraigned at the bar of human frailty. All things are ordained by his will; all things are subservient to his power; all things will be adjusted at the last day of assize, with goodness, with equity, with never-failing righteousness, and mercy.

In the wide extent of human life, where the conflict of contending passions militates so strongly against universal harmony, it is not to be expected that universal happiness can obtain. Actuated by various affections, stimulated by a competition of interests, and urged by the fluctuating impulse of differing propensities, a succession of men will ne-



cessarily effect a successive change in their external conditions, so as to produce a regular gradation in the orders of society.— Birth and honours and riches are casual and adventitious: if enjoyed by one, and denied another, there can be no just reason of complaint; no motive for disquietude; no argument for a dereliction of duty. The promiscuous allotment of good and evil, so observable in the world, whilst it argues the natural instability of sublunary affairs, gives no sanction for distrust against Providence, nor affords any pretext for murmur and discontent:—" The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all." They form one consolidated chain, by which the comforts and conveniences of each are reciprocally held together: they mutually proclaim the wisdom of that Almighty Being, whose only end in creating mankind was to promote their general welfare, by giving to every individual, however distinguished, his separate talent, in the management of which he will be ultimately accountable to his Maker: for at the

last day the dead shall arise, both small and great, and stand before God ; and the books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.

Man may be considered under two denominations, rational and social ; nor can he perform his duty to his Maker aright, as a being endued with *reason*, if he submits not to the moral duties contained in the divine law, and prescribed to him as a member of society : since the same authority which commands us to fear God urges the necessity of being subject unto the higher powers upon earth, not only as we dread the vengeance of wrath, but as we regard the tranquillity of our own conscience.

Here then is implied a distinction of mankind ordained in wisdom, and continued in goodness and mercy. And whatever speculative system may occasionally intrude upon the world subversive of this doctrine, the principle must ever be found visionary and



delusive, destructive of social order and individual comfort. Equality of condition can never obtain, but subordination must ever exist; the duties of Christianity enjoin the latter, whilst experience will attest the impracticability of effecting the former; so that, however popular such an idea may be, the projectors must be fully convinced that the scheme, if at all productive of partial good, has a greater tendency to general evil: and “Who is he that saith, and it cometh  
“to pass, when the Lord commandeth it  
“not?”

The different orders of the body *politic* being analogous to the various parts of the body *natural*, we shall find that where contention arises, disorder must ever ensue; whilst the assistance of each part, in its separate office, conjointly tends to the happiness and well-being of the whole. As the body is not one member, but many; and the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of  
“you; nor, again, the head to the feet,  
“I have no need of you;” but each part

should have the same care one for another : so, also, does this reasoning hold good in the affairs of life ; for as society is made up of different individuals, and all individuals have not the same office, none can be guilty of schism with impunity ; since each is bound in his respective station to promote the public good, by an attentive observance of those duties which both the laws of reason and the laws of religion so strongly enjoin.

If then subordination is thus forcibly pointed out by the analogy of nature, and its beneficial effects ascertained by its genuine result, we cannot be too cautious in admitting those arguments to the contrary which the infatuated tribe of theorists have been sedulous to inculcate ; and, since the concurring exertion of every individual tends to the promotion of collective prosperity, the necessity of some determinate laws by which the vicious may be controuled, and the virtuous protected, is evinced by the strongest arguments of social harmony and national preservation.

In particular cases, indeed, some *partial* evil may unfortunately ensue; yet this militates not against the propriety of such an establishment: since the clashing of interests, and the irregularities of human passions, are the efficient causes of such tumult and accidental disorder. Nor is the obligation to observe such laws diminished by the abuse of them, but rather strengthened by the consideration of that necessity which urges a restraint upon the depravity of mankind. Certain fixed rules, universally adapted to produce certain effects, naturally give rise to regularity and order in society; whilst the want of such rules must necessarily lead into continual perplexity; since, if every individual was guided by a presumed law of reason only, judging for himself, he might resist that authority which the wisdom of ages has confirmed to be expedient, and gradually destroy the basis of social happiness, and introduce public confusion. Without the love of our country, and the strictest adherence to those laws which it has thought necessary to establish, there can be no real

glory, no stability of confidence, no expectation of success, no enjoyment of life, no barrier against calamity and distress.

The different distributions of Providence, unequal or unjust as they may appear, are wisely ordained as the means of happiness to man. No station can be pointed out so *high*, as to be unattended with its concomitant evils;—no condition so *low*, as to be deprived of its own peculiar comforts. Let man be placed in a rank of superior elevation and authority; ennobled by birth; and distinguished by every qualification which can render him amiable and beloved; yet benevolence itself, when armed with sovereign power, is too often assailed by faction, and insulted by the vicious, the turbulent, and the misguided. Nor should we be unmindful, that the inferior orders, though they have not the *externals* of happiness, they are not destitute of its *reality*;—they experience less of anxiety, whilst they enjoy, without molestation, their share of protection and support.

If such is the nature of society—such the dispensations of Providence,—that a difference must necessarily subsist between one man and another, surely it is our interest to be resigned to the will of God, by whose œconomy of wisdom such a system obtains. Humility, contentment, and thankfulness, whilst they form a part of our *duty*, contribute in no small degree to our temporal advantage. And the same authority which enjoins the fear of God, teaches us to honour the king:—the same which denounces a penalty against the commission of evil, threatens punishment for the omission of a known precept; by the same principle on which we admit the validity of the command in the *one* instance, we are bound to the observance of general obedience in *all*; for “the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings.”

Since, then, the providence of God watches over the affairs of man;—since He governs the world in wisdom, and hath given to every one his peculiar talent for which he



is accountable; it becomes not the creature to direct, but to obey. It is his duty to be subject, to be patient, to be resigned: to receive all events as from God; adverse with meekness and hope, and prosperous with gratitude and humility; taking heed that he never charge his Maker foolishly, but upon all occasions submitting himself unto his disposal, who humbleth and proveth him, to do him good at his latter end.

To the immediate class of society to whom this discourse is addressed, many duties in a more peculiar manner belong. The pride of their country, the bulwark of the nation—British sailors have long been distinguished for their undaunted bravery, and acknowledged to be generous and humane to a vanquished enemy. May their character be emblazoned by the conscientious discharge of every moral obligation, and ennobled by an uniform adherence to the duties of Christianity! The glorious display of Omnipotence is ever before their eyes: they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in

the deep: they cannot but observe the *power* of the Almighty; they cannot but experience the *goodness* of his mercy:—the one will impress them with reverence and awe, whilst the other will excite them to gratitude and resignation.

Religion to the sailor must ever be a source of comfort and satisfaction, to which the mind may apply for support, and from which, under all its afflictions, it can derive consolation and repose. The heart which comes within the atmosphere of religious hope will feel the sentiment of tranquil complacency, and experience the serenity of conscience derivable from virtuous principle. Nor will such a disposition of mind tend less to the eradication of fear and inquietude than it operates as the most forcible stimulus to heroism and bravery. In the violence of the storm, in the rage of battle, in the time of danger, and in the hour of distress, it will dissipate the gloom of despondency, and inspire the soul with courage and resolution. Religion never intimidates: it will add firm-

ness to action, and perseverance to boldness: “ the wicked alone are the truly fearful, “ whilst the righteous are as bold as a lion.” The principles of religion, if duly impressed upon your minds, will teach the love of your country as paramount to private cases: and, when the knowledge of duty produces its proper effect, it will evince the necessity of subordination; it will urge obedience to the laws, and enforce a ready submission to those who are placed in authority over you. Let the thoughts of your duty break in upon the cares of your station, and repel every frowardness of nature. For the honour of your country, for the well-being of society; as ye regard your present comfort, or anticipate future happiness; be not forgetful of those religious services you owe to your God, or those moral duties demanded of you by man. Remember ye are Britons, ye are Sailors, ye are Christians; and, under each denomination, ye are called upon to assert your title to the name, by the actions which ye perform. And, as “ the ways of “ man are before the eyes of the Lord, who



“pondereth all his goings;” so let the thoughts of a future judgment be firmly rooted in your hearts, and consider that the day must arrive when the graves shall be opened, and the sea shall give up her dead : when no subterfuge will be admitted for neglect of moral duties,—no excuse will be able to palliate the breach of religious principles : but as ye have acted your parts well or ill in this life,—as ye have fulfilled the different stations allotted to you by the wisdom of Providence, with integrity or dishonesty, so shall ye be rewarded or punished in the next.

Remember that the actions of all men are noted in the register of Heaven : that ye cannot hide yourselves from the all-piercing eye of Omniscience, nor escape the vengeance of an offended God. Let no dissension militate against the performance of your duties as *Sailors* ; let not infidelity urge you to forget your Maker as *Christians* ; or disaffection induce you to dishonour your Sovereign as *Subjects*. Consider seriously the

importance of that trust confided by the nation to your charge; and let no specious argument of discontent prevail, so as to disturb that unanimity which should ever be the pride, as undaunted heroism has ever been the badge, of your profession. Fear God, and honour the king; agree in brotherly love one towards another: reverence your superior officers; obey their commands with cheerfulness, and protect their persons from insolence or assault. Unite in one common interest, for the welfare of society and the preservation of your country; so shall ye deserve well of mankind, and ensure the protection of your Sovereign:—and, as ye have adhered with firmness to the principles of Christian faith and obedience, so shall ye obtain the reward of eternal bliss in the mansions of everlasting peace.

## SERMON III.

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### 2 TIMOTHY iii. 1.

THIS ALSO KNOW, THAT, IN THE LAST DAYS, PERILOUS  
TIMES SHALL COME.

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TO unravel the deep mysteries of Providence, and explain with accuracy the unfathomable purposes of the eternal will,—to comprehend the immensity of infinite wisdom by the most extensive stretch of finite reason,—is beyond the fullest exercise of our faculties: it was never granted to man. And though the speculative philosopher may despise more humble but not less useful applications of his knowledge, and think such transcendent inquiries the only object worthy of his pride—yet, as his researches proceed in the investigation of

subjects so complex and inscrutable, he cannot but perceive the vanity of his expectations, and the presumption of the attempt: for “unsearchable are the judgments of the Almighty, and his ways past finding out.”

Infatuated with the name of philosophy, self-opinionated and daring, the theorists of modern science disavow the divine origin of the Scriptures, or seek after interpretations adapted to the depravity of contaminated principles,—urged by their own impetuosity, and stimulated by the false conclusions of the more profane. Whilst many are too proud to admit truth as their guide, or surrender their conceits to the force of argument and of facts, the practical theologian reverences with humility the *mystery of godliness*; and explores with attention the recesses of the human heart, to rectify its imperfections, and cleanse it from impurity and doubt:—the devout religionist patiently awaits the event of a prediction, and, in the fulfilling of a prophecy, derives an ad-

ditional argument in favour of Christianity. For \* as the force of prophecies already accomplished still remains undiminished, and the fulfilment of inspired predictions loses not its evidence by the lapse of time, so the further completion of either confirms the truth of the Gospel, and illustrates the mysterious plan of divine dispensations.—“Heaven and earth shall pass away,” says our blessed Saviour, “but my words shall not pass away.”—And St. Paul assures us, that, “in the last days, perilous times shall come.”

Having premised *thus*, it may be deemed bold and presumptuous to affix any exact period to which this prophetic prediction is more immediately applicable. But to whatever age it evidently belongs, or by whatever criterion its approach may more minutely be discerned; whether it has reference to particular sufferings in the church, or universal calamities in the world; the various circumstances indicatory of the me-

\* Vid. Hey's Theol. Lectures.

lancholy event are too alarming, at this unhappy crisis, to escape observation or analogical reflections.

The peculiar marks by which these *perilous times* are designated seem so appropriate to the present day, that we have much to dread lest their completion is at hand.

In the descriptive recital of manners so fully delineated by the apostle, as the sure indication of approaching perils, we find the maxims of modern philosophy too clearly coincide; whilst the same dark catalogue of vices marks the character of the age, and anticipates the completion of the impending event.—“ Men shall be lovers of themselves, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy; truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good; traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.”



These are the strong expressions of St. Paul, marking out the symptoms of ensuing calamity ; these are the signs in the last days, by which we may judge that *perilous times* are coming.

The gloomy picture of fashionable depravity represents a faithful copy from the original drawing :—to determine minutely the particular likenesses, and trace the respective lineaments of character so closely blended and intermixed, would be tedious, unprofitable, unwise :—it would be to arrest the pencil from the hand of an artist, and spoil the design of the *whole* by an injudicious and intemperate colouring of its *separate parts*.

The leading features of the inspired prediction seem to be a defection from every virtuous principle ; a general dis-esteem of religious duties ; a disavowal of the Gospel ; a contempt of Christianity ; an hatred of established governments ; infidelity, licentiousness, and atheism.



View the state of religion among us—disregarded, dishonoured, and insulted.—View the state of morals as displayed in every order of society—loose, inflexible, and distempered.—Observe the sure and rapid transition from the decay of piety to irreligion; from irreligion to immorality; from immorality to depraved action; and from *thence* to the subversion of every virtuous principle, and the introduction of universal confusion and distress.—View these symptoms of disease, and reason and self-preservation will prescribe the necessity of timely corrections to destroy the malignity of their effects:—for, if morals may be deemed the offspring of religion, we shall find that the branch becomes infected, and withers, in proportion as the parent stock is vitiated and corrupted. Nor is this assertion only; facts speak for themselves;—and as evil communications are ever destructive of good manners, so have we less to dread from the vindictive sword of war, than from the seductive allurements of vice, and the inundating torrent of modern scepticism. Though

infatuated ambition may pursue with energy the wild hopes of exterminating establishments founded by wisdom and approved by experience, yet have we little to fear, so long as religion is our bulwark, and infidelity affects not the heart of our own nation.

Human force may be resisted by force, and at last die through its own weakness; but as the principles of immorality and irreligion are disseminated with activity, and infused as it were in the nutriment of our infancy, and incorporated with the food of our growing manhood, so wickedness will strengthen with our strength, till the hopes of reformation are lost:—and in the end those perilous times will come, when misery shall erect her standard over departed innocence, virtue, and happiness.

Were we to consider the various occurrences which have taken place throughout the different ages of the world; and, from

the *events* that have ensued, argue the truth of the prediction at any particular period; we should find, from the first formation of man to the foretold miraculous deluge in the days of Noah; from *thence* to the covenant made with Abraham, *continued* to the long-expected appearance of the Messiah, *downto* the present state of things; that the prophecies have been gradually fulfilling, though no one has been equal to assign the precise period to which any particular one might be applied. Though human understanding, however enlightened by knowledge or improved by study, has never been able so far to develop the mysteries of divine predictions as to anticipate their determined instant of completion, yet have they been no less certain, and faithfully accomplished—"The Lord hath  
 " done *that* which he had devised; he hath  
 " fulfilled his word that he had command-  
 " ed in the days of old."

Should we again trace in history the wonderful changes in human affairs, re-

garding either civil or religious polity; from the Jewish institution to the predicted fate of Jerusalem, and the establishment of the Roman power; from the rise of the Eastern and Western churches to their depression, decline, and fall; and from thence descend to the astonishing revolution effected within our own memory: we may safely infer the superintendence of that Divine Providence, which “delivereth and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth.” And whilst the arm of Omnipotence is still extended over the world, scourging its inhabitants with desolation, and terrifying them with the shock of empires, we have no small reason to apprehend the completion of some further prediction; since reason and religion and experience will suggest to us this useful reflection, that the disobedience of man carried on to national impiety and licentiousness has been uniformly the cause of perilous times, and the source of public calamity and distress; and thus by analogy

we may draw conclusions by no means favourable to our own nation.

If then we apply the prediction in the text, which accords with every thing foretold by the Prophets and our Saviour himself, to events immediately preceding the final consummation of all things; or should we consider them applicable alone to the impending destruction of any particular church or kingdom, our dread must increase in proportion as irreligion and depraved manners obtain: since, if such have ever been the harbingers of its decline or persecution, much caution is required on our side to avert such judgments, and to remove those perilous times which seem hastening to overwhelm us.

From whatever cause our present calamities may have arisen, whether from the immediate dispensations of an all-powerful Being incensed at our iniquities, and displeased at our continued transgressions; or whether we may justly impute such accu-



mulated misery to the rapacity of man habituated to crime, and taking advantage of unfavourable seasons and popular clamour for withholding the bounties of Providence, the effect cannot be too seriously deplored. In the first instance we are called upon *individually* to supplicate the throne of grace for the removal of our difficulties; and in the latter we have no less incitements *collectively* to deprecate the wrath of an offended God, who permits in his wisdom the instrumentality of second causes, the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; to the end that we may learn righteousness, and reform our ways, before worse evils fall upon us.

An attentive view of those prophecies which have been actually fulfilled must operate strongly on the human mind; and as they evince the truth of divine prescience, and the power of supernatural inspiration: so must they no less be effective of that faith which teaches us to believe that all things shall be accomplished by pro-

gressive advances ; till completion shall remove the veil of obscurity, and the darkness of conjecture shall be dissipated by the light of unequivocal fact.

Though the extent of misery predicted as the consequence of sin may surpass speculation ; or the period of its accomplishment may baffle the wisdom of the wise, or evade the foresight of the most enlightened understanding ; yet the certainty of such prediction being verified in the appointed time, may be truly admitted from the full assurance of others, which have already been most punctually fulfilled.

Civil history confirms the truth of the sacred records. The destruction of the Jewish polity ; the severe punishments inflicted upon idolatrous nations ; the debasement and humiliation of pride and infidelity wherever they have generally prevailed ; the recorded desolation of kingdoms conspicuous for immorality and detestable for their vices, are so many facts established in



the most ample manner; and so many proofs of the certainty of future predictions being progressively fulfilled; that the risque of calamities foretold as the consequence of disobedience should be an argument of the strongest force, and effective of the most cautious prudence; lest we fatally experience the punishment of those enormities, which admonition might have corrected, and reformation prevented. But it should seem that the superstition of former days, contrasted with the general irreligion of the present period, holds forward a picture by no means flattering or pleasant:—to avoid the shore we founder on a rock;—to dissipate the power of ceremonious superstition, we resign the comforts of religion for profaneness; and offer adorations at the altar of human infirmity, whilst the God of mercy and of truth is rejected, blasphemed, and insulted.—The progress of infidelity is a fact, plain, notorious, and evident:—it cannot be denied:—it is too clear; it is too glaring; it is too common:—we cannot look without beholding its effects; we

cannot listen without hearing of its horrors; we cannot feel without sympathising in the miseries of mankind, and deploring the cause. The wretchedness already suffered should make us cautious; the calamities still threatened should make us tremble:—it is predicted that in the “last days perilous” times shall come.” Past and present circumstances agree with this prediction: and in applying the prophecies to events, though much misery has formerly abounded in the Christian church, yet, in further application to present appearances, the latter times may seem fast approaching.

The dispensations of Providence may indeed be surrounded with darkness, and enveloped in mystery, so that the precise times and seasons are hid from our eyes; yet the evidence of divine predictions is by no means diminished by partial obscurity, which prepares a way for effecting those events in their proper season; and the\*longer

\* Vide Hey's Theol. Lectures.

time which elapses before their fulfilment, the greater the proof that prophecy could not be the effect of chance or of human foresight ; the uniformity of design remains the same, notwithstanding the difficulties which may be alleged by the disciples of modern infidelity.

An enlarged discussion concerning the tenets of modern philosophy, both as they regard political or religious establishments, would be to revive animosities much better forgotten, and circulate still wider those doctrines of infidelity which practical virtue and good example will counteract with more safety, and refute with more certainty of success. But, to check the growing influence of such maxims so destructive of present comfort and obnoxious to future punishment, by a just representation of those well attested facts which confirm the truth of the Gospel ; to infuse into the minds of the wavering and unsettled, the principles of piety, morality, subordination, and content, is of no less advantage in purifying

spiritual disorders, than the administering a speedy antidote is of use to correct the maladies incident to the natural body.

The present system of dissipated manners; the growing prevalence of fashionable guilt; and, withal, the general inattention to whatever is praiseworthy and religious, require a strong corrective, and enforce the necessity of united zeal and exemplary conduct to reform. The joint exertion of talents and authority; the consolidated strength of pious instruction and persevering diligence; of active virtue, and elevated precedent, can alone resist and overcome the powers of infidelity, and avert those perilous times predicted by the Apostle, as the certain prognostication of more aggravated calamity.

No order of men how high soever its rank, no class in society however low its station, can *now* be so blind as not to decry their danger; or so infatuated with darkness as not to discern the necessity of union and

virtue to prevent it. Princes, and magistrates, and ministers, and people ; every gradation in the scale of social order, and each individual in it, from the well-beloved monarch on the British throne to the lowest artificer in his realms, has each his reciprocal duties ; each is concerned to ward off those perilous times injurious to all alike ; each has his peculiar comforts, and domestic charities, to preserve in *this* life :—they have *all* an immortal soul to secure in another.

Whatever progress we may have made in the arts and sciences ; whatever advances in political refinement or philosophical researches ; however perfect we may call our knowledge, or sagacious our understanding ; yet have we much to dread from that inattention to religious duties, that disregard to sacred ordinances, that dereliction of public worship, and that general system of modern scepticism which abounds. The shallow reasoning of artifice contends against infinite truth ; the insinuating poi-



son of human fallacy strives to exterminate the well-attested origin of divine revelation ; the comfortable prospect of future reward, and the doctrines of future punishment, are ridiculed and rejected by the infatuated disciples of ill-directed incredulity.

To counteract the ill effects of such immoral principles, and give energy to the cause of virtue and religion, much has been done—though we may still hope that greater exertions will be made. And, as we may observe that good examples have the most effectual sway on the manners and morals of the community—since men naturally imitate the actions and behaviour of their superiors—so the higher the character, the greater the influence ; the more elevated the station, the more prevalent on the minds of the people.—Were the dignified, the exalted, and the ennobled, alike emulous of that light which shines so conspicuous in the highest department, much benefit would result from the imitation ; —reformation among the lower orders,

and happiness among themselves. The trial would not be difficult; the effect, though slow and progressive, would be certain and increasing; the attempt would be honourable; the victory would be glorious.

With regard to the Clergy, circumspection was never more essentially necessary: the laxity of the age calls for the most rigid adherence to their pastoral care; the most conscientious discharge of their sacred functions; their personal residence among their respective flocks; their exhortation, their admonition, their assiduity, their perseverance: they are the ambassadors of Christ—their duty is to preach salvation to mankind; to rebuke, to persuade, to convince, “to let their light shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven.” The higher their station in the church, the more vigilance, the more labour, the more zeal, is expected;—entrusted with many talents, for each must they give an account. The di-



stinction of rank renders their conduct more observable, and the presumption of their knowledge will give force to their precepts. To the Clergy much is entrusted; from their profession much is required; their obligations are unequivocally strong; their example eminently distinguishable;—"they are the lights of the world." So entirely does the future happiness of mankind depend upon fulfilling the fundamental duties of religion; so much is individual prosperity connected with individual virtue; and so truly is our present welfare as a nation concerned in whatever may remove those perilous times which threaten to overwhelm us with destruction, that too much attention cannot be paid to the inculcation of the principles of Christianity; or too much exhortation and argument used to enforce moral reformation, and practical obedience.

Would men be persuaded to divest themselves of prejudice and pride; would they check those vicious propensities which mo-

dern science too much flatters and supports; would they become less “lovers of pleasure, and more lovers of God,” a perceivable alteration would soon be effected in their manners; and piety would ensue where immorality too much abounds\*. Would the enthusiastic admirers of *natural* reason and *human* philosophy be persuaded not to reject the *credentials* of religion, they might be soon induced to examine *particulars*; and the more carefully they consider either its doctrines, its precepts, its advantages, or its credibility, the more will they admire its general system; for it is no inconsiderable advantage which Christianity enjoys beyond all other religions which have ever been promulgated, that the more it is considered, the more it is approved; the more we investigate the evidences of it, the more powerfully shall we be convinced of its natural beauty, its intrinsic value, its divine authority; and that uniform tendency which it has in promoting our comfort *here*, and eternal happiness hereafter.

\* Vide Hey's Theol. Lectures, vol. i. p. 171.

Are faith and repentance the sum of our religion? Let us evince the sincerity of our belief by uniformity of reformation. Are rewards annexed to obedience of God's commands, and punishment to the transgression? Let us strive to avoid the latter by an instant observance of his laws, and ensure the former by zealous perseverance to the end. Are those perilous times predicted as the consequence of sin, clearly evidenced in the occurrences of the present day? Let us strive to avert the more impending danger by means as conducive to present prosperity, as they will be effective of future glory.

To commence reformation cannot be difficult; to procrastinate may be dangerous; the cloud seems lowering upon us; and destruction may not be far off.—Without repentance we can have no hopes of pardon; without amendment no plea for remission; without obedience no hopes of reconciliation and reward. The grand scheme

of man's redemption has been perfected by the acceptance of the atonement made by Christ, and it admits of no variation from subsequent circumstances of time and place;—every offer of grace and mercy is tendered for our acceptance on certain conditions;—the promises of the Gospel and its blessings extend to all mankind: no further covenant will be proposed, nor will this ever be withdrawn. The divine author of Christianity has declared that his religion shall *not* be suppressed; the powers of darkness shall *not* succeed against it; neither the philosophy of man, the taunts of the infidel, nor the scoffs of the impious, shall prevail to the eradication of it;—that though perilous times shall come when men of corrupt minds shall resist the truth, yet shall they proceed only to certain limits; their folly shall be made manifest, and punishment shall surely await them.—The prophecies *must* be completed, and the predictions fulfilled; so that in the end Christianity shall fully triumph, and all mankind

shall be collected as one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, the author of our faith, our salvation, and eternal happiness.

## SERMON IV.

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### PSALM cxxiv. 7.

OUR HELP STANDETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;  
WHO HATH MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

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THE commemoration of any signal escape from national danger, or the celebration of any national blessing, is a duty we owe to God, to society, and to ourselves. To God, by whose gracious interposition calamity has been avoided, or happiness introduced: to society, for whom such deliverance has been miraculously effected; as the best means of reviving in the mind of the people that principle of gratitude and religious worship which is too much neglected in the casual occurrences of the day: and to ourselves, as it has a tendency to keep alive those sentiments of submission, and dependance upon



Providence, which form the characteristic feature of the sincere Christian.

The return of this day brings to our recollection a train of circumstances serious in their consequent events; wonderful with respect to the means by which impending miseries were prevented; and joyful for the termination of that discord which had so long endangered the safety of these realms. To perpetuate the memory of such a period, the piety of our church has enjoined this annual thanksgiving. Nor should we forget the merciful display of supreme goodness which protected our nation from ruinous calamity, when cruelty was undermining our political wisdom; and the zeal of infatuated superstition threatened the destruction of our ecclesiastical system, and the purity of our religious faith.

That gratitude is incumbent upon mankind for all the blessings which they enjoy, is the dictate of reason, and the injunc-



tions of Revelation; and the more remarkable the benefits received, the more strenuous should be our returns of thankfulness—the more animated our effusions of praise.—As we derive all things from the immediate hand of universal benevolence, so should we remember the stream from whence our blessings flow, and give honour unto the fountain of all mercies. Each in his respective station partakes of some peculiar favours:—as *individuals* we enjoy some especial comforts, and cannot but perceive the necessity of that tribute which is due to the author of them; for in “him  
“ we live and move, and have our being:” And as a *collective* body we cannot but acknowledge the superintendence of that all-gracious power who hath hitherto protected our nation from those direful calamities with which it has been threatened; and who *still* protects us from the evil machinations of *those*, who, jealous of our prosperity, seek our ruin. To arrogate to ourselves any righteousness, deserving such transcendent interposition, would be to de-

serve punishment instead of favour; and to impute to ourselves the power of self-deliverance, independent of that invisible Being who weigheth, as it were, kingdoms in a balance, would be to provoke his anger; and, with human weakness, insult the goodness of Divine Majesty.—Humility will rather bow with reverence to the throne of Heaven;—piety refer every blessing to the Sovereign of the world;—and the real Christian, seeing the hand of God reached out in all his dispensations, will acknowledge his supreme agency, and learn and understand his will from the course of his appointments: for with God is plentiful redemption, and our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who hath made both the heavens and the earth.

To discuss the various opinions which agitated the minds of men during that unsettled period, when tyranny usurped the place of freedom, and the contest for dominion existed in faction, and was supported by terror, would require the most cau-

tious pencil of undeviating prudence. To delineate a picture so replete with barbarity, and malicious crime ; to revert again to those controversies of religious dispute, which, as their origin commenced in error and political intrigue, were carried on with no less fanaticism, than inveterate prejudice ; might have a tendency to stimulate those passions which have long ago subsided : and at the present juncture, at least, it may be deemed imprudent to hazard a repetition of obsolete argument and phrensy ;—argument which reason has overcome,—and phrensy which experience has taught us to pity and to deplore.

To canvass the peculiar tenets of the Romish church, or enumerate the stratagems by which its abettors strove to maintain their power ; to recite the miseries attendant upon the struggle, or retrace the causes which urged the necessity of restrictions as a prevention against future calamities, and which have been exercised with moderation and with lenity, cannot, at this

time, be effective of good: they might lead to disquisitions much better consigned to oblivion; or remembered only from that prudential vigilance which former distresses have made requisite. The annals of our country record the deeds of threatened cruelty, and the page of history blushes at the recital:—the miseries sustained, attest the infirmities of man, and the subsequent event sufficiently proves that our help and our support stand alone in the name of the Lord,

Without any minute investigation of such topics, so much better adapted to the calm consideration of the unprejudiced than to the impassioned zeal of contending advocates; the subject of the present discourse may be more advantageous to *ourselves*, from the consideration of that supreme power which stood forth as the shield of our faith, the protector of our constitution, and the rock of our defence. It may be more beneficial to *society* from the introduction of arguments conciliatory of affec-

tion, and enjoining the paramount necessity of civil subordination, and undissembled loyalty.

Whatever cavils may arise in accounting for those actions by which the ends of Providence are sometimes accomplished, it will be presumptuous to draw conclusions derogatory of his divine justice; since the difficulty in accounting for them may not improperly be cleared away by referring the general effect to the purity of the first cause, which justifies the permission of temporary trials, from their uniform tendency to promote the future welfare and happiness of mankind.

If it can be no impeachment of the divine Holiness to *permit* sin in the world (for God cannot be the *author* of sin), it cannot surely be any impeachment of his justice to produce good from evil, and render the very vices of man subservient to the administration of equitable economy.— It is rather an argument of the wisdom of



Providence than of imperfection, that those acts which are wickedly designed for the attainment of evil purposes are by an invisible agent directed to a different end, and made to dispense his judgments and his mercies to the world. The ways of his dispensations are numerous, complicated, benevolent; and who knoweth the counsel of God, or who hath knowledge of the Most High?—The weakness of man cannot contend with success against the Almighty; for though many are the devices of his heart, yet shall they be brought to nought;—his schemes shall be frustrated, and his folly bring ruin upon himself: but the counsel of the Lord, *that* shall stand fast for ever.

The misapplication of a general rule may, in some instances, be as productive of evil consequences to society, as the *partial* observance of any particular command may be effective of individual danger.—An *occasional adherence* to any known duty will by no means compensate for



an *occasional* transgression ; nor do we fulfil the injunctions of the supreme Lawgiver, when we discard a dutiful reliance upon his Providence, because he has directed vigilance and activity as the ostensible mode by which the success of human projects is to be ensured. The want of considering the superintendency of God, too often induces men to trust in their own strength, and rely upon human dependencies, and human resources, for the accomplishment of their designs. Here we misapply the rule which establishes the necessity of foresight and circumspection upon the maxims of prudence ; and sin, by the neglect of that paramount law which enforces the duty of religious trust, and religious confidence in God—that *law*, which teaches wisdom by the force of its obligation ; which deprecates presumption with the threats of punishment ; and which declares that “ cursed is the man that  
 “ trusteth in man *alone*, and maketh flesh  
 “ his arm, and whose heart departeth from  
 “ the Lord ;” but “ blessed is the man that

“ trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the  
“ Lord is.”

Among the numerous instances illustrative of the doctrine here adduced, “ that power belongeth unto God, and that our help standeth in the name of the Lord,” we have *one* no less beautifully described in the language of inspiration than remarkable for the contrast it exhibits. The pious resignation of the king of Judah, opposed to the lofty haughtiness of the king of Assyria, presents a lesson of instruction to future generations truly interesting and important:—it draws a parallel between trust in the Almighty, and confidence in man; and, with peculiar sublimity of expression, discloses the victorious result of religious principle over imperious insolence, and human prowess. “ O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear; open, Lord, thine

eyes, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.—O Lord our God, I beseech thee save thou *us* out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even *thou* only.”—Such were the supplications of a good heart, warm with devotion, though bent down with sorrow; persecuted with implacable hatred, yet reposing with placidity upon the mercies of infinite power; whilst the vaunting of indignant contumacy was answered with threat, and repelled with authority: “Because thy rage against me, says the Lord, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ear; therefore I will put mine hook into thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way thou camest; for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape, out of Mount Zion; the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this.”

The prayer of the pious Hezekiah was heard,—his humility was accepted,—his

petition was granted; whilst the arrogant Sennacherib, depending upon the multitude of his chariots, and boasting in the fulness of presumption, fell miserably the victim of self-confidence; and in the house of idolatry was smote with the sword of his own sons.

From the conclusion of this history, much inference may be drawn, much knowledge be collected, much benefit be derived.—Neither the judgments nor mercies of God will have their proper influence and effect, if we perceive not the hand by which they are directed: his judgments operate without reformation, and his mercies lead not to thanksgiving, if we ascribe them to the efficiency of subordinate agents.—Whilst we impute them to the skill and activity of men, we naturally seek those supposed authors of our prosperity, either for the removal of what is grievous, or for the continuance of what is agreeable: and in this we err;—in this we are disobedient;—in this we are ungrateful;—

we are too proud to acknowledge, with the holy Psalmist, that “our help standeth in  
“the name of the Lord.”

So far as the conduct of man, seeking assistance from man, may be fairly allowed; and so far as *united* effort may advance the prosperity of a nation, or *united* resistance may avoid impending danger, (since men are usually the instruments of Providence, by whose means God fulfils the counsels of his wisdom) so far our applications to them may likewise be instrumental to engage his favor, or his blessings; but this application to *secondary* causes should never be exclusive of the *principal*; nor, whilst we ask the favor and assistance of man, should we allow ourselves to forget the God that is above, or be unmindful of *him* that “doeth  
“according to his will in the army of heaven,  
“and among the inhabitants of the earth,  
“whose hand none can stay, or say unto  
“him, What doest thou?” And as the imbecillity of nature should teach us this honour due to the Almighty, so should we remem-



ber, likewise, that he expects equally the tribute of praise for every blessing we enjoy; as the devout homage of supplication for the farther continuance of his love.

The contemplation of that universal sovereignty exercised over the transactions of mankind will assist us in the conduct of our lives;—it is of use to us in our domestic troubles, and will promote our public welfare: it will fill us with the most humble dispositions of mind towards our Creator, and excite our obedience towards all his commands. “Although the fig-tree shall  
 “not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the  
 “vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and  
 “the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks  
 “shall be cut off from the fold, and there  
 “shall be no herd in the stalls; yet let us re-  
 “joice in the Lord, and joy in the God of  
 “our Salvation.”—And whilst we see the severities of an offended God executed with justice—and the sore judgments of his wrath, the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, stalking upon the face of the earth—let us



learn wisdom before it is too late, and from example derive knowledge; refrain from offences which have called down his vengeance; and, with the fervor of Hezekiah, when threatened with destruction, let our actions *deserve* the removal of such protracted calamity.

A full conviction of our weakness and imbecility, even in the smallest transactions of life, will lead us to the contemplation of some superior being on whom we may rely for support in the time of difficulty, and for relief in the hour of distress;—a Being, whose *power* is equal to his goodness, and whose *goodness* arises solely from the perfection of his nature. Such resignation, such dependance, and such reliance, will in no small degree contribute to our happiness, by the effects they must produce; since, with such a regard to the infirmities of *man*, every principle of action will be directed by the sense of our duty towards *God*.—But, can we be truly convinced of the superintendency of divine Providence, and

rebel against the power of the Almighty! can we believe, faithfully, that our help standeth in the name of the Lord, and provoke his anger by our iniquities? can we be justly thankful without practical obedience? or is it possible to expect the benefit of future mercy, when we repay the goodness of former interpositions with ingratitude, and with contempt? Such proceedings cannot but be odious to the great Disposer of events, and ensure his wrath, by aggravated crimes of hypocrisy. For *consider*, that no thanksgiving, no prayer, no supplication, no sacrifice can avail, so long as innocence of life is wanting. Should we pretend to rejoice for public safety, and with our lips implore the protection of the 'Most High, whilst our hearts are fully set to do evil;—should licentiousness betray our dissimulation, and open excess prove the insincerity of our petitions, our rejoicing will be in vain, and our prayers become mockery:—Such conduct implies disregard to the divine law, and, instead of averting danger, will doubly provoke

that anger which will punish us with the bitterest judgments for adding insult to mockery, and profaneness to irreligion.

It is not the will of the Almighty to punish without reason, or to correct without design;—perfection contradicts such proceedings. Righteous as he is in all his ways, and holy in all his works, the happiness of his creatures is his aim, and benevolence the chief attribute of the Deity. When his judgments are in the world, the people learn righteousness;—by them we are convinced of the wickedness of our nature, and the duty of submission;—by them we are taught contrition for our sins, and the necessity of correcting those evil propensities by which our misfortunes are produced.—To arouse the energy of the soul by serious reflection, and to force us, as it were, to the consideration of our own lowliness, tribulations are wisely permitted; and in proportion as judgments fall upon other nations, whilst *we* escape such calamities, so should our gratitude shine forth

in humility and in praise; and repentance for our own misdeeds become more sincere by the thoughts of our deliverance. Whether others may be greater sinners than ourselves, is an unprofitable, is an endless inquiry; it is not for us to determine: for who art thou that judgest another?—to God, the righteous judge of all the earth, will every nation stand or fall.

That sin is the ground-work of national misery is a truth beyond contradiction, and beyond doubt. Look back upon the times of old,—consider the kingdoms that have been destroyed,—let Jerusalem speak the lesson of wisdom;—let the heathens proclaim the judgments of God;—and let the sufferings of the present age pronounce the fate which may result from perseverance in wickedness. Every afflicting dispensation of Providence must be understood as the consequence of transgression, and the effect of disobedience;—and as this reflection should keep us from censuring others without charity, so should it lead

us to examine our own ways, when the arm of the Almighty is extended over our own land.—This reflection should teach us the salutary inference deducible from example, that whatever our prosperity,—whatever our resources,—whatever our national importance,—God is no respecter of persons ; but unless *we* repent, we shall all likewise *perish*.

If from the history of former times we collect experience, let the remembrance of perils plead caution for our safety, and prudence for our conduct:—that we trust not our religion, or our laws, or our rights, to the unstable, to the vicious, to the immoral; since without the strongest impressions of religious principles founded upon the basis of Revelation, nurtured by a purity of faith, evidenced by practical obedience, and exercised with meekness and Christian charity, our constitution must inevitably fall. Without religious principles no government can be durable, prosperous, or happy :—as well may we endeavour to reconcile



civilisation and barbarity; call anarchy perfection, and discordance union; as to admit that happiness can exist without religion, and peace and prosperity abound where licentiousness, and disloyalty, and vice rear their standards, in opposition to piety and allegiance—to virtue, and the Gospel.

It has been, unfortunately for the present æra, the first object of modern refinement to propagate a system of relaxed and pliant morality, accommodating itself to the vicious inclinations of mankind;—justifying their errors, and tolerating their vices;—to appeal to the feelings, not to the judgment; to raise a fermentation in the breast of the unsuspecting multitude, injurious to their present comfort, rather than consolatory of their sorrows, or effective of their future happiness:—in such a system, audacious, despicable, and cruel, much political error is united with philosophical falsehood, and strives to undermine the very foundation of every thing sacred, praise-worthy, and of



good report.—Be vigilant then, be circumspect;—national prosperity and individual safety cannot exist without subordination; nor can general harmony abound unless vice is resisted by efficient laws, and the religious principles of the people co-operate with the ruling powers, and support their authority by dutiful obedience to their commands.

“Fear the Lord, and the king,” is the admirable advice of Solomon—the wisest of men—the wisest of politicians; “and meddle not with them that are given to change.”—As the fear of God is the beginning of religious wisdom, so loyalty to the king is the basis of political freedom, and the surest preventative against confusion and disorder.—Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, and consider that he who resisteth resisteth the ordinance of God, and great will be his punishment.

Let us not be dissatisfied or murmur with indecent restlessness at every partial cala-

mity which may befall us;—neither let the presumption of self-sufficiency supersede the rational duty of reliance upon our God: but rather let us pray that the same Almighty Being, who discovered and confounded the cruel plot and enterprises of former times,—and who wonderfully preserved us from the attempts of the artful, to bereave us of our religion, and our laws,—would still be our protector against the open assaults of foreign adversaries, and the undermining subtlety of domestic traitors.

Let the consideration of God's kindness to this nation excite in us such heartfelt sentiments of gratitude and thanksgiving as may produce an amendment of our lives, and a firm resolution of persevering obedience:—let not the distinguished favors conferred upon these realms be repaid with negligence, or rejected with disdain;—as if *our own* sagacity procured such blessings, or *our own* conduct merited such inestimable distinction. If the means of preservation employed by man should be effective

of his designs ;—if his counsel should prove safety, and his enterprises successful, to *God* give the praise. For though the result of action may appear externally as the effect of human foresight, or the contrivance of human policy, yet to arrogate to ourselves the power of defending ourselves, independent of his protection, would be to offer the incense to the idol of human weakness, instead of sacrificing at the altar of supreme Omnipotence.—By the bounty of Providence we are sustained ;—by his arm we are protected ;—by his overflowing kindness we are secured both in our temporal acquisitions and spiritual blessings. Beware then that we forget not the Lord our God ; but, in firm conviction that national impiety produceth national adversity, and wretchedness increaseth in proportion as wickedness becomes more and more general, let us seriously repent the *cause* of our calamities that the *effect* may be removed. Let us strive to avert those perilous times which threaten more accumulated

woe, that our troubles may cease, and righteousness and prosperity may flourish and abound.—And, since reason and history and experience evidence the fact, that every kingdom that is divided against itself is brought to desolation, let the veil of oblivion be cast over those lamentable divisions which seem at once the contrivance and sport of our enemies :—so shall stability triumph over weakness,—integrity shall overcome the vicious artifice of intrigue,—and the disgraceful petulance of discording talents give way to the firmness of collective energy and virtue. Finally, let us pray that peace may return to Europe's distracted borders ;—that plenty may again dwell in our land ;—that our religion may remain undefiled ;—that the seeds of vice may be destroyed among us ;—that our constitution may be transmitted to the latest posterity—firm, unimpaired, and resistless.—*And*, as we value temporal blessings, or hope continual security, let us join with one heart and one voice

in our petitions for the Family now reigning upon the throne of these dominions; that to the last extent of time they may live in the hearts of their subjects,—respected,—honoured,—and beloved.





## SERMON V.

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1 TIMOTHY iv. 16.

TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF AND UNTO THY DOCTRINE;  
CONTINUE IN THEM: FOR IN DOING THIS THOU SHALT  
BOTH SAVE THYSELF, AND THY THAT HEAR THEE.

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THIS exhortation of St. Paul contains a charge of the most serious moment to those who are entrusted with the ministerial function;—it implies also, as a concomitant with it, the importance of those doctrines revealed in the Scriptures, which it is the especial duty of the clergy to preach and to defend.

From the time of the apostle's miraculous conversion, we find him eminently diligent in the cause of Christianity.—Urged by the recollection of former deviations, he evinces a mind of superior energy

in defending the faith to which he was so supernaturally called; and in which he was so firmly established.—Indefatigable in the discharge of his duty, and strenuous in supporting the cause of that religion of which he was nominated an apostle “by the commandment of God,” he does not content himself with the mere exercise of his function in a contracted circle where few only could be benefited by his advice; but, with a perseverance which acquired strength from the motives by which he was guided, and from the awfulness of the subject which he advanced, his faculties were called into more extensive action, and applied to every useful purpose.—The most distant regions listened with rapture at the power of his eloquence; the most unenlightened heathens became converts to Christianity, by the obvious cogency of his arguments. Illuminated with knowledge from above; being converted from error unto truth; from the power of darkness unto the marvellous light of God: being persuaded and convinced himself, he la-

bours to persuade and convince others to embrace that true religion of Christ, which he knew to be essential to the happiness of mankind.—Nor could the obstinate incredulity or malice of his adversaries; nor the contradiction of the wise disputers of false science; nor the barbarity of continued persecution; nor any tyranny to which he was exposed, compel him to relinquish his design. He taught the precepts of morality; he pointed out the way which leadeth to eternal glory; he preached the redemption of the world through the merits and intercessions of *him* who was offered a sacrifice for sin; he fulfilled his delegated commission to the Gentiles, and invoked them to obedience by the assurance of a reward.

In the epistles immediately addressed by St. Paul to Timothy, “his own son in the faith,” the apostle takes an opportunity of reciting, in a compendious manner, the great and mysterious truths of the Gospel dispensation;—he represents and enlarges upon a variety of duties incumbent upon

all men ; and, in terms the most expressive of affectionate regard, he urges him to a conscientious discharge of those particular obligations annexed to the nature of his office in the church. Every sentiment he makes use of is to incite him to industry and attention, and to impress upon his mind the venerable awfulness of so important a trust. No precept is given him which charity would not sanction and allow ; no direction for doctrine, nor injunction for conversation, but what the Gospel enforces ; no advice for his general behaviour but what reason would justify, and the object of his employment demand.—Alluding to the frivolous and unmerited observations which had been directed against his beloved disciple, he animates his confidence, and elevates his spirits by the cheering hopes of improving knowledge and increasing grace. “ Let no man despise thy youth,” says this encouraging adviser ; “ but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity : give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to

“doctrine; neglect not the gift that is in thee.”—To kindle the most dormant spark of emulous perseverance, by which inadvertency might be counteracted by caution, and overcome by vigilance and a regard to duty; he counsels his inexperience in the words of well-tried knowledge, and exhorts him, in the strongest language of argumentative truth, so to act in the administration of his office, as to promote the happiness of mankind, and ensure his own salvation. “Take heed (says he) unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine;” let thy life be such as becomes the sacred character of a minister of Christ’s Gospel, and thy preaching be the pure and uncorrupted word of God; “for, in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”

Such an exhortation, so solemn, so determinate, and withal so comprehensive of the duties required of the stewards of the Gospel, cannot but impress upon the minds of those who have already received the ministry, or who may henceforward solicit the charge,



the most awful considerations in regard to the end, the design, and the importance of the trust. And since it was the gracious intention of our blessed Saviour to establish an universal system, which, from the mildness of its laws, the promises of its rewards, the evidences of its truth, and the purity of its ordinances, might become acceptable to all nations upon earth ; we may conclude the design of this system to be truly good, from the universality of its operation ; the end supereminently beneficial, from its tendency to promote piety and holiness ; and its importance most consolatory and sublime, from the manifestations of a future state so assuredly substantiated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself, the fountain of all righteousness and wisdom. If then such was the purpose of the Divine Author, in giving so benevolent a combination of extensive goodness and mercy to the world ; if the mildness of the Gospel precepts renders our religion amiable ; and the justice of its laws are founded in equity ; where can we find an excuse sufficient to excul-



pate remissness? or where can we seek for pardon in neglecting so great salvation?

It is true indeed that the Gospel is called the law of faith, and a covenant of grace; but we cannot infer from thence that good works are excluded, or that the privileges annexed to Christianity are attainable by faith *alone*; since it is an argument used by our Saviour himself, contradictory of such an opinion, when he declares that “not every one that calleth me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven.”—Here then we must reflect, that although the Gospel, as a system of religious faith, is more pure and holy than the Mosaic dispensation, and better adapted to excite our reverence and esteem—the latter being appropriated to a peculiar people only, whilst the former is unlimited, and more generally calculated, by its intrinsic excellence, to gain the admiration of mankind—yet much is expected from its professors, whereby they may ensure its pri-

vileges. Nor are the duties alone confined to the ministers of the Gospel; to the *people* likewise many obligations are enjoined.—“Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation;” is the advice of St. Paul.—And “we beseech you, brethren,” says the same apostle, “to know them which labour among you, and admonish you; and to esteem them highly for their work’s sake.”—But since the word preached might be ineffective of its proper end, they are no less cautioned against the danger of being hearers only, than strenuously incited to be doers also,—that they may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, and be fruitful in every good work, and increase in the knowledge of God.

Though the religion of Christ is neither overcharged with rites, nor burdened with ceremonial observances; neither sorrowful in its principle, nor austere in its tendency;

it is not to be accounted free from difficulty : some degree of labour is expected, some degree of vigilance commanded.—It requires no small portion of mortification to correct the irregularity of desire, and subdue the propensities of wild inclinations : and though its doctrines are dissuasive from vice, and its discipline obligatory to virtuous actions, the most kind and merciful provisions are made for the unavoidable infirmities of human nature, and inadvertent transgressions of human weakness.—No harsh restrictions debar us of those innocent gratifications necessary to the relief of incidental evils, nor are we denied the participation of those things which are conducive to our pleasure, when sanctioned by reason, and enjoyed with moderation ; we are permitted so to use the world as not to abuse it ; and that whilst we pass through things temporal, we finally lose not the things eternal.

Nor does Christianity recommend itself only by its own amiable qualities, but is en-

forced upon us by the best of comments, the example of its divine Author.—And forasmuch as the life of Christ was in conformity to the will of God ; as we hope to please the Father, we are bound to exert our endeavours to imitate the Son : to bear our calamities with patience, and our afflictions with fortitude ; to subdue temptation by the spiritual armour of faith, and encourage our hopes by the certain expectation of that crown of glory held forward to our view. “ Be of good cheer,” is the exhortation of our Redeemer to his desponding disciples ; let your courage be undaunted, and your steadfastness unshaken ; if ye are wanting of a precedent of sufferings supported by patience, or an example of resolution whose conquest has been glorious, look at *me*, your master, and “ be of good cheer ; *I* have overcome the world.”

As, then the promises of eternal happiness are assured upon certain conditions to be performed, and not consequent of necessity

or independent election; and to attain the promises it is also requisite to know the conditions upon which their confirmation depends; it is a fair inference to conclude that *some mode* should be adopted by which this interesting doctrine may be ascertained: for, as certain means must ever be used for the accomplishment of the end proposed, and as the end of Christianity is salvation annexed to obedience and faith, so the rules of its Author, his injunctions, his doctrines, and commands, must necessarily be announced as the first step towards engaging that obedience and faith which are indispensably requisite to the attainment of the promises,

Here then appears the great wisdom and goodness of our Lawgiver, who, having appointed a new religion, which, by adherence to its commands, is instrumental of happiness, condescended likewise to impart the very *means* by which that happiness might effectually be secured. He not only brought life and immortality to light through



his Gospel, but, having selected to himself a peculiar order of men to preach the glad tidings of peace to all nations, was pleased to delegate to them a power of ordaining others in successive generations to the same administration. Our blessed Saviour then, the end of whose coming upon earth was to establish an universal system of religion ; to preach the Gospel of righteousness ; to call sinners to repentance, and to guide all people into the paths which lead to everlasting life ; having, in the sacrifice of himself once offered, made a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and procured the reconciliation of God for us, left us not destitute of those assistances by which we might effect our salvation.

To establish that kingdom of which Christ himself laid the foundation, and became the chief corner stone,—to extend its boundaries and enlarge its dominion,—is the especial care of those who are immediately entrusted by proper constituted authority to preach the Gospel : Nor is their com-



mission unimportant, or their responsibility trifling. They are stewards of God's household; they are ambassadors of Christ; they are the lights of the world; to *them* much is given, and of *them* will much be required. Their undertaking is arduous, and their duties multifarious and awful;—their charge is to preach the word of God; to be instant in season, and out of season; to take heed to themselves and to their doctrine; to continue in them; that, in doing this, they may both save themselves and them that hear them.

To undertake the most important trust without the qualifications adapted even to an inferior office,—to commence the immediate ministers of God's holy word, without the requisites of diligence, fidelity, and faithfulness to acquit ourselves honorably in concerns of an inferior magnitude,—is impiety aggravated by presumption; it is spiritual wickedness heightened by spiritual pride; it is to take the pure vestment of religion to hide the deformities of idle-

ness, of covetousness, and hypocrisy. The honour, the excellence, the responsibility of the trust,—the zeal, the assiduity, the indefatigable perseverance, required of the ministers of the Gospel,—are so strongly and so awfully expressed in Scripture, that it should seem rather a wonder that so many should become solicitous of the charge, than that the vineyard should be destitute of labourers.

It is a proposition laid down in the Gospel, “that he who loveth God should love his brother also;” and it is an argument adduced with much propriety, that he who loveth not his brother whom he *hath seen*, cannot be supposed to love God whom he hath *not* seen.—As then the most certain proof of our love towards God consists in our affection towards men, and especially towards them with whom we are more strictly connected, we cannot be said to admit the truth of the proposition, unless we comply with the terms in *general*; and, as ministers of the Gospel, evidence the sin-

cerity of our profession by a *particular* regard to those more immediately committed to our charge.—“ The good shepherd,” says our Saviour, “ knoweth his sheep, and “ is known of them ; they hear his voice “ and follow him ; but a stranger will they “ not follow, but will flee from him, for “ they know not the voice of strangers.” Here we have a principle, acting with the greatest force in the application. The ministerial function is not to be considered only as a profession to which secular aggrandisement is attached, or by which eventual distinction may be obtained. It is a work of difficulty—it is an enterprise of hazard—it is honorable alone from the importance of its duties, and becomes respectable only by the integrity of its members. It is a profession by no means to be entered upon by constraint, nor taken to through caprice ; but solicited with becoming consideration, and regarded with serious reflection. The hireling may indeed assume the externals, but when he seeth the wolf coming, he leaveth the sheep

and fleeth ; but the true shepherd will enter upon his office with veneration, will persevere in it with resolution, will watch over his flock with fidelity, with diligence, and with zeal.

“ Feed my sheep, feed my lambs,” was the most benevolent instruction given by the most sacred authority. The old and the young, the most feeble and the strongest, will occupy the attention of the good Shepherd ; whilst the neglect of *any* must deserve animadversion and reproach. But as extrinsical inequalities subsist, and the distribution of spiritual, no less than the dispensation of temporal gifts, is partial and confined, the obligation to advance the knowledge of religion is proportionably increased upon the powerful, as a defection of means in attaining that knowledge is observable among the weak. And as the souls of all men are of equal value in the sight of God, who hath no respect of persons, common *justice* should concede to the ignorant a superior claim to the instruction

of the learned ; and as want of edification among the uninformed should entitle them to a greater degree of attention than what the more enlightened stand in need of, common *charity* must allow, that to the *poor* should the Gospel be preached.

It is a reflection however as unfortunate as it is true, that censure is sometimes attached not *undeservedly* to the partial administration of religious duties; and whilst inattentiveness is complained of and admitted as the cause of much irreligion among the higher ranks of society, it is to be wished that the obstacles against an improved state of morals among the lower classes were more efficaciously removed. It was a complaint made by St. James, as a censure cast upon the preference so commonly observed in the Jewish consistories or places of civil judicature, that if there entered into their assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel; and there came in also a poor man in vile raiment; that respect was paid unto *him* that wore



the gay clothing, and it was said unto him, *sit thou here* in a good place; and to the poor man, *stand thou there*, or sit here under the footstool; so, that too great partiality was shown in the *one* instance, and too great contempt in the *other*; where a more becoming conduct should have been preserved. This observation of the apostle, however, originally intended to the correction of abuses, too frequent in the *judicial* courts, are not inapplicable to the same degree of partiality so censurable in the edifices of *religious worship*.—Exhortations to duty are rendered nugatory and vain, when the want of accommodation for hearing counteracts the effect of the most salutary advice; and where can submission and resignation and patience be learned by the poor, when restriction too commonly bars the entrance to our chapels of fashionable resort? Or where can the glad tidings of salvation and the consoling precepts of morality be heard, when the principle of indecorous emolument, or preventive right in the parochial churches of the metropolis, operates to the



exclusion of the well-disposed tribe of affliction and want? The seats of the opulent, though numerous, are too frequently unoccupied; whilst the footstools of the less fortunate are contracted, limited, and unequal to their proportion of number in the extensive scale of society. As in this we have respect to persons, and commit sin, the certainty of the fact should require an attempt to obviate the evil; and a judicious alteration can never be deemed unnecessary, or deserve the character of innovating inutility.

In concerns of the greatest importance, the most assiduous attention should ever be observed; nor can we suppose any thing more interesting in its tendency, or more important in its ultimate end, than the performance of religious duties. In some things which regard our secular advantages only, we may be inattentive without much injury, and incautious without imminent danger; but in so serious a concern as the salvation of the soul, each individual is acting for himself; each must depend upon

his own conduct; each is answerable for the talent committed to his care, whether it be squandered away by idleness, or improved by diligence; whether dissipated by profligacy, or rendered useless by sloth. But though every one has his own peculiar talent entrusted to him, and for which he is accountable in his own person; yet of those who are more eminently distinguished as the distributors of God's more gracious gifts, much more severe investigation will take place;—*they* will be judged for the misconduct of others also: in proportion to their abilities will their return be expected; and in proportion to their neglect will be their punishment, should they abuse those gifts, or withhold that good, which it is in their power to effect.—And if such be the trust assigned to the stewards of God's household; if so solemn the engagement, so momentous the charge; the exhortation of St. Paul, that they take heed to themselves and their doctrine, must operate with a double force, as circumstances arise which may demand an increase of their exertion,

and a greater degree of vigilance and application.

Here then we may not improperly argue the essential advantages derivable from the consolidated strength of the whole body; to counteract by their example, as well as their doctrine, the dangerous attacks of philosophising theorists.—In times like these, when the dismal cloud of national suspense darkens our horizon; when a dereliction of moral duties, and an open contempt for religion in general, appear, as it were, the harbingers of more calamitous events: In times like these, when the lax tenets of false science cope with the truth of divine revelation; when the purest fountain of happiness is contaminated by the dregs of impetuous licentiousness; much exertion is required of the clergy; much unanimity among *themselves*; much energy in their profession. The integrity of the church must be the palladium of the establishment; the utility of religion must be proved by the good effects which it produces upon the

lives of its ministers: immorality must be checked by the pure example of every department; and the venomous shafts of the infidel rendered innocuous and ineffectual by the well-directed arguments of practical goodness and active virtue:—for if any thing, says the warm apologist for, or defender of, Christianity, and the Bible, “if any \*  
 “ thing can revive a sense of religion in the  
 “ higher classes of life; preserve what still  
 “ remains of it amongst men of middling  
 “ fortunes; and bring back to decency of  
 “ manners and the fear of God the lowest  
 “ of the people; *it must be the zeal of the*  
*“ clergy.”*

If then our constitution is valuable from the happiness we derive from an impartial administration of its laws; if our establishment in the church, by which religion is advanced, and the consoling doctrines of the Gospel are made known, is accounted worthy of regard; if domestic comfort and

\* Preface to Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, p. 6.

social order can claim one moment of reflection ; if as a nation we expect the blessings of the Almighty, to avert our present calamities, or shield us from impending danger ; if we value our temporal prosperity, or hope for eternal reward, Christianity must be our defence. And though we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith, yet are we not to use the destructive weapons of persecution, but the invincible power of truth ; not to fight with the desolating arms of an Eastern impostor, but overcome with the sword of the spirit of Christ, who teaches us to promote religion by religion ; and to enlarge his kingdom by the invigorating influence of exemplary virtue, practical benevolence, and universal charity.

A full conviction that religion is not the child of the state, but the parent of all order ; and that national prosperity is best promoted by an uniform adherence to what religion enjoins ; and that the same divine authority which urges the necessity of



moral righteousness enforces the command of rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; would eventually establish that mutual harmony and agreement which have too long been assailed by the insidious artifices of the factious and discontented.—But here likewise we must observe, that conviction of error is the best adapted mode of inducing assent; for though compulsion and punishment may be deemed occasionally necessary to curb the violence of the impetuous, or the stratagems of the vicious, yet in religious opinions, (divested of political considerations) the delusions of the mind are seldom overpowered by force, though they are frequently corrected and subdued by persuasion, by argument, and by example. The oratory of Tertullus, and the power of the magistracy, could not prevail with the Athenians to abandon their vices: whilst the soundness of St. Paul's doctrine, seconded by the exemplariness of his character, confuted his opponents, and made even his adversaries submit: “for as  
“ he reasoned of righteousness, and tem-



“perance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”—If then the affections of the mind are not to be overpowered by force, nor overcome by resistance, but may frequently be subdued by well-applied truth, and retained by persuasive conviction; much caution, and delicacy, and zeal, are requisite to attempt so desirable an end : and we shall find it a certain effect necessary of its cause, (however intrinsically valuable Christianity may be) that religion and moral principles will predominate or decrease in the same proportion as the characters of the clergy are respected, or lightly esteemed. Nor can they more advance *both*, than by adorning their profession with every desirable ornament of meekness, and diligence, and condescension, and integrity; so that by their own actions they may lay men under a necessity of believing that Gospel which they preach; and by letting their light so shine among them, as to enforce conviction by exemplification of good conduct, rather than by speculative arguments introductory of dissenting opinions. And as so much

depends upon themselves as a particular order especially appointed for the most important services, the mild tenets of Christianity should incite them to that benevolent deportment towards each other, which should form the characteristic of their profession. In *them* should humility illustrate those amiable and most endearing precepts of the Gospel, which teach us to acknowledge an universal relationship to all men as our brethren in Christ; and to respect the indigent worthy, more than the undeserving opulent; and to attend to the poor in spirit, more than the proud in heart.

Arguments of seemingly extraneous import are not unfrequently deemed admissible when they become the medium of useful information, or, by analogy of conclusion, rectify errors, and tend ultimately to the establishment of some latent truth. Should we draw any inference then from the much-lamented increase of sectaries, the supposition at least might appear well grounded, that the peculiarity and differ-

rence of religious tenets or internal persuasion does not so strongly operate to their separation from the established church as many other extrinsical circumstances which might be adduced. Unremitted assiduity and persevering zeal have long stamped the character of the dissenting community; and as the mind is affected most strongly by *externals*, or led aside by the contemplation of something foreign to the subject itself, it may be observed as a fair deduction of reason, arguing the competition of two contending interests, that as carelessness and indifference are observable in one instance, and ardour, and animation, and perseverance, in another, the latter will more easily entice adherents to a cause *well-supported* by zeal, whilst a cause *more deserving* of energy suffers for want of the same impelling force. Nor is this inference objectionable in its discursive application from things to persons; for however the agreement of individuals may be concentric to one point as the chief object of their wishes, the completion of the end in view can

never be accomplished, unless efficient means are individually exerted. And as the discriminable sentiment which gives activity to any particular design directs likewise the correspondent conduct of those more immediately intrusted with it, though the design itself may be less excellent than the one opposed, yet an addition of strength is derived from the persistence in the means more strenuously employed, and more than a counterpoise is effected. From the retrospect of this argument (if it be allowed any claim to our consideration) we may candidly infer the most urgent necessity for undissembled union, well-directed energy, and continued exertion, in every department of the ministry. And as social intercourse, cordiality of affection, and liberality of sentiment, subsist among the *clergy*, they will contribute in no small degree to the extension of their influence among the *people*, and afford an accumulative evidence that their exhortations are sincere; so likewise does such courtesy of behaviour give additional weight to the doctrines they incul-

cate, and adorn their character with the testimonies of meritorious approbation.

It is not to be understood from hence, that any concession is granted to the opinions of those who have urged an equality of temporal advantages in the church, as beneficial to the cause of religion, and introductory of more perfect agreement among the different members of it; since such a system in itself is most strongly objectionable from the *attempt*, which would be dangerous; and the *completion*, which would be subversive of laudable emulation and improvement.—Subordination is necessary to the welfare of the civil state; nor is it of less utility in regard to the ecclesiastical establishment; since, without a just adaptation of parts to the well-regulated cement of the whole, order would give way to confusion, and disturbances arise where harmony should obtain: and it is a maxim of prudence, confirmed by experience, that general good should ever be considered as a paramount obligation, whilst individual



advantage should be looked upon as a secondary object only. As the less honourable members of the natural body promote the welfare of those which are accounted more honourable,—and every member in the body politic is effective of additional strength to the state,—so the inferior departments in the church also form one consolidated system of order, and each member in his respective function conduces to the prosperity of the aggregate : And as the labours of the inferior clergy co-operate with the higher powers, whilst *they* likewise are responsible for the more important duties of their station, the most extensive accordancy is required of all. No difference of station should prevent an union of abilities, of industry, of watchfulness, of reciprocal kindnesses among *themselves*. Nor can it be deemed an unimportant obligation in the higher departments, to whom the immediate regulation of the church belongs, to exert themselves by every possible means *effectually* to ameliorate the still-depressed condition of those whose professional charge



is laborious; whose diligence is indefatigable; and whose reward is scanty\*:—since it is an obvious remark, that to the inferior clergy is attached, in every branch of their avocation, the great burden of religious duties;—and as externals never cease to operate upon the minds of the multitude, their influence must be in a great degree defective, for want of that corroborating sanction, which both the modes of life, and an improved civilization, have rendered absolutely requisite, to give authority to their exhortations.

It is, generally speaking, in the power of the clergy themselves to prevent much common reflection, which no less injures the cause of religion than depreciates the character of its professors: it is in their *own power* greatly to advance the former, and to heighten the estimation of the latter. No pre-eminence, however exalted; no abilities, however transcendent; no faculties,

\* *Vide* Bishop Watson's Letter to the late Archbishop of Canterbury, 1783.

however enlarged; will ensure respect, unless they are illustrated by qualities of superior excellence and recommendation: but where diligence is observable, where energy is uniform, where fidelity is conspicuous, where piety is exemplary, they ensure admiration and reverence; they exhibit the most forcible comments upon the whole system of religion and morality; they gain an empire in the hearts of the people; and, where these are conspicuous, the clergy become *truly* the lights of the world.

It may be deemed unnecessary to contend for what cannot be disallowed,—a reciprocity of kind offices from the ministers to the people, and the people to the ministers; or to assert, with the apostle, that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel. These topics have been long ago explained; the mutual advantages derivable to both have been amply enforced, and the necessity of such a participation generally admitted. But no incentive to

virtuous action should be omitted, no stimulants to excite the dormant seeds of piety should be accounted insignificant, when the decay of either seems to threaten our happiness as individuals, or our welfare as a nation.

Though the doctrines of Christianity are so clearly revealed and confirmed; though the sacred oracles of divine truth are open to the inspection of all men; though the precepts of the Gospel are uniformly rational, and awfully sublime; yet a corruption of principle seems to strive for the ascendancy over revelation, and the present æra of boasted refinement teems with effusions of infidelity most pernicious and alarming. A peculiar heedlessness to every thing which respects religion or religious duties prevails; the best intended schemes to advance the cause of piety, and with piety the happiness of mankind, are frustrated or disregarded. By fashion our churches are neglected; by fashion the sabbath is deemed only as a day of festivity and

amusements; morality is accounted a jest; and the prohibitions of the divine law are evaded by a laxity of construction.—Nor is it asserting too much, to remark that where religion still exists, it too much degenerates into human maxims; it is warped from its spiritual purposes, and moulded and tempered to make it palatable and polite.—The rigours of the law are softened, the penalties extenuated, and the name of *honour* sophistically explained in contradiction to the command of *Him* who declares, in the most express terms, “if thou wouldest “enter into life, keep the commandments.”

How such a defection from the faith may have arisen we can be at no loss to conjecture, when we consider the stratagems which have been employed by its adversaries.—And the more any one refrains from good, or willingly gives way to evil, the more he imperceptibly strengthens his impenitency, and increases the power of depraved inclinations. Nor can we be more at a loss to account for the prevalence of corruption,

when we reflect on the industry which has been exerted to destroy the barriers of virtue, and overwhelm society, by publications the most vicious, and examples the most abandoned.—And as man is a copyist from his infancy, his reason is exposed to false representation; his power of resistance is weakened by inadvertent imitation; and whilst he rashly partakes of the sins of his companions, he pursues the *wrong* to the progressive abandonment of the *right*, till he chooses darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.

In such an eventful period as the present, when peculiar, though it is to be hoped only temporary, difficulties are experienced, the duties of religion demand our most serious attention; nor will any excuse palliate the neglect of those commands which Christianity enjoins, since neither ignorance can plead an extenuation, nor necessity justify the violation of them. Of the hearers of the word much is required; of the preachers of righteousness a still greater



circumspection is demanded ; since by neglect or incaution the latter will not become less enemies to the system they are bound to support, than the more rash projectors of speculative innovation. By a dereliction of vigilance and energy, they will gradually undermine that fabric which, by the most sacred ties of duty and of profession, they are compelled to secure : and as a double responsibility is annexed to the chief defenders of the citadel, so should the out-works be assailed with vigour, and the fortress be attacked with success ; an increase of punishment and disgrace will deservedly adhere to those, whose absence from their posts in the time of danger may prove the cause of an inglorious surrender. And it is to be lamented that the application of human institutes have been insufficient to correct such abuses as too commonly obtain. Much has been attempted, and in part effected ;—much more is requisite to be done.

To those who are endued with more ex-



cellent talents ; elevated to the most exalted situations ; possessed of learning, of power, of authority, the people look up with reverence, with regard, with superior attention. *Such*, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, are eminently distinguished to stop the mouths of the infidel, to confute the philosophy of the impious, and rebuke the madness of the blasphemer,—to edify and enlarge the church of Christ. And as the whole order depends like links of the same chain, which by *union* alone becomes useful and secure, each member should mutually assist the other, that, by a right disposition of their different talents, they may contribute to the establishment of impregnable strength.

Let each therefore in his separate department exert individual zeal, and prove strongly the influence of personal example : let them all seriously consider that solemn account which they must one day give at the awful throne of eternal justice. Let them minister as of the ability which God giveth,

“ giving no offence in any thing, that the  
 “ ministry be not blamed ;” but in all  
 things showing uncorruptness, gravity, sin-  
 cerity, and sound speech that cannot be  
 condemned,—“ that he which is of a con-  
 “ trary part may be ashamed, having no  
 “ evil thing to say against them.” Let  
 them proclaim aloud the glad tidings of the  
 Gospel ; “ take heed unto themselves and  
 “ their doctrine, and continue in them : for  
 “ in doing this, they shall both save them-  
 “ selves and them that hear them.”

## SERMON VI.

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LUKE xvi. 25.

REMEMBER THAT THOU IN THY LIFE-TIME RECEIVEDST  
THY GOOD THINGS, AND LIKEWISE LAZARUS EVIL  
THINGS; BUT NOW HE IS COMFORTED, AND THOU  
ART TORMENTED.

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THE dispensations of God, though merciful and gracious in their ultimate end, are nevertheless frequently adduced by the Sceptic as a plausible disputation against the superintendency of Providence, or the justice of divine administration. The inequalities subsisting in the temporal concerns of mankind (however reconcileable to religious faith, which, arguing from the attributes of the Deity, deduces conclusions of rational conviction) are unadvisedly resorted to by some, as militating against a presumed rule, which the precipitance of erroneous philosophy deems more equitable and perfect.

To obviate difficulties which may arise from the supposable appearance of discordant œconomy ; to exhibit the purposes for which God's bounties are more immediately bestowed ; and to prove the consistency of his goodness in whatever has regard to general dispensations ; we are urged, by the persuasive arguments of wisdom, to adopt an application more consonant to the equity of divine proceedings.

The figurative style of expression so peculiar to the Eastern nations was in various instances complied with by the blessed author of our religion, whose study and inclination was to promote the present welfare and future happiness of mankind ; and in conformity to this principle, which directed every action of his life, he not unusually had reference to\* parabolical representation, as the best adopted mode of instruction. He had observed its tendency to impress upon the mind an efficient imagery, which would ultimately produce convic-

\* *Vide* Archbishop Newcome on our Lord's Conduct, § x.

tion by the force of natural inferences ; and as some degree of caution was occasionally requisite in censuring particular vices, he wisely considered this manner of correction as the most inoffensive, whilst it was equally useful from its general import ; since personal application might be readily admitted from an extensiveness of general animadversion. “ He that hath ears “ to hear,” says Christ, whoever hath capability of receiving my doctrines, “ let him “ hear,” and understand. An attentive lover of truth will easily discover the features of divine wisdom, though a veil of obscurity is cast over them ; and in proportion as his faculties are more and more exercised in the investigation of God’s proceedings, his conduct will be improved by the increasing light of intellectual progression.

The consideration of that haughtiness which marked the trait of the Jewish character (for the Jews were so rooted in their animosities that they shunned all dealings with the Samaritans) ; from their unbound-

ed magnificence, their love of earthly grandeur, and their invincible attachment to temporal enjoyments; whilst they no less hated their enemies, despised the stranger, and disregarded the sufferings of the afflicted, it may not be an *improbable* conjecture that our blessed Saviour had recourse to this parable as condemnatory of their intolerant disposition. And since, from some peculiarity of circumstances related, we cannot admit the representation before us as an historical *fact*, we may nevertheless regard it as a lesson of material importance, heightened by the colouring of religious truths. It conveys a consolatory reflection to the oppressed, to the injured, and to the unfortunate; it has the strongest tendency to promote benevolence, charity, and universal kindness; and to eradicate the seeds of pride, of arrogance, and contemptuous neglect: nor can it be read by any individual, whatsoever his rank, or whatsoever his station in life, without beneficial advantage from the conclusions which may be reasonably deduced.



In the affecting narrative before us, (whether it may be accounted history, or parable, or the union of both) we have the strongest contrast of extreme poverty, and extreme riches; the criminality of thoughtlessness attending the possessor of the latter, and the deplorable situation to which the former state is occasionally subject. To hold forth an incitement to benevolence on the one hand, and motives for patience on the other; to evince the certain consequence of *abused* prosperity, and the final reward of *resigned* sufferings; we hear the result of both in the equitable determination of future judgment.

The characters introduced in this well-described picture of human action are two men of the most opposite condition:—each of a different fortune; each of a different behaviour. The *one*, rich, voluptuous, and thoughtless, abounding in wealth, and rioting in worldly gratifications; forgetful of his God, and unmindful of his fellow-creatures. The *other*, forlorn, wretched,

and diseased ; destitute of friends, and disabled by natural infirmities ; whose trust was reposed in the goodness of Providence, and whose pittance depended upon the adventitious benevolence of the more fortunate.

“ There was a certain rich man which  
 “ was clothed in purple and fine linen,  
 “ and fared sumptuously every day.” Neither pleasures, nor mirth, nor honours, were wanting to oppose the intrusion of care, or to gratify his feelings with joy ; all that avarice could wish, or prodigality consume, was freely at his command. But in *this* did not consist his crime ; his condemnation did not proceed from arbitrary caprice, nor his judicial sentence from the casual circumstance of his temporal prosperity. Regardless of that bounteous hand from whence every blessing was derived, he overlooked the source of his happiness in the pride of his abundance : trusting alone to the power of his wealth, he neither acknowledged the over-ruling hand of

Providence, in the contemplation of his own weakness; nor attended to the calls of humanity, when affliction put in its claim for relief.

“ There was a poor man also,” says the parable, “ named Lazarus, who, unable “ from infirmities to support his frame, was “ laid at the rich man’s gate, full of sores.” Forced by necessity and urged by the imperious cravings of immediate hunger, he begs to be fed only with the crumbs which fell from the table. His request was moderate; his desires were few; his penury was urgent; his petition was not fictitious; nor should his prayer have been refused. But, alas! the infatuating power of wealth! the intoxicating draught of pleasure! the tale of misery seldom enters where gaiety presides; the cup of affliction will not accord with the cup of joy. Immersed in thoughtlessness, save only the giddy thought of sumptuous entertainment; clad in luxurious purple, and surrounded with the adulatory praises of the festive; the rich

man could not condescend to admit reflection as a companion, nor charity as an inmate. The tear of sorrow fell from the eye of Lazarus unpitied and disregarded. Maimed, disabled, and emaciated, no hand of mercy was stretched out to help him; no alms were given to appease his hunger; no asylum was offered to support his weakness: the crumbs that fell from the table were denied; and, "moreover, the dogs  
" came and licked his sores."

To permit such wretchedness to remain *unheeded* must have been cruel even in the possessor of moderate ability. The common feelings of nature would have pleaded a cause so worthy of compassion. But where shall we find palliation for inhumanity so notorious, and so void of pretext? The cries of distress could not have been concealed from the ears of the rich man; the cause could not have been unknown; the object could not have been unperceived. Ignorance cannot be admitted as a sufficient excuse for uncharitable-

ness, when there is power of information, added to the duty of inquiry. In the midst of plenty, benevolence should more strongly predominate; in the luxuries of extravagance, the fragments should be saved;—the poor should not be forgotten.

Though the tabret, the viol, and the dance, may drown the supplications of the indigent, and lull the heart of the wealthy to rest, yet charity should increase the joys of mirth, and sensibility should heighten the charms of pleasure. Pride, indeed, may forbid the sons of prosperity from personal administration of supernumerary plenty, custom may reconcile an haughtiness of deportment, or fashion may disown a conduct more becoming, and more amiable;—yet neither pride, nor custom, nor fashion, are paramount obligations; they by no means justify a disregard to religious and moral principles. For as gratitude to God should urge the faithfulness of our respective stewardships, and incite us to the performance of the divine commands; dis-

obedience and guilt must ever attach to the more prosperous, who, careless of every motive of duty or of compassion, fare sumptuously every day; imparting no portion of their good things to the hungry, and commissioning no domestics to be the almoners of their plenteousness. Rioting in looseness of low dissipation, or violating the laws of honesty, the menials of the great too strongly bespeak the necessity of censure for their occasional inhumanity, and merit correction for their general prodigality and vice. Insolent, pampered, pitiless; copyists of elated pride, and sycophants to exalted rank; the abusers of time, and wasters of their masters' substance, they disdain the sight of affliction, or insult with contumely the pleadings of distress. Poverty dare not approach the threshold of grandeur with impunity, whilst these minions of folly obstruct every avenue to the ears of the mighty. From hence we may suppose a considerable part of the rich man's guilt to have arisen. Habituated as he had been to scenes of joy, and incautious beyond the



festivity of the moment, neither arrangement in his domestic concerns, nor system in his private duties, were suffered to intrench upon individual enjoyment or self gratification. And here might be observed a degree of criminality too frequently overlooked: Inattention to what is *right* may be considered as the introduction of actions absolutely *wrong*: and though the *commission* of evil may be esteemed of higher malignity than the *omission* of what is good; yet the latter cannot be accounted insignificant, since inattention and thoughtlessness are wrong in themselves: and in proportion as the rich have opportunities of acquiring information, their criminality is increased by the *neglect* of the opportunity.

“ It came to pass that the beggar died ;” death put a period to his misery.—As a recompence for his well-endured sufferings, and well-approved patience, life and immortality and happiness were his reward in heaven. “ He was carried by the angels “ into Abraham’s bosom.”—Here the ar-

rogance of the wealthy may contemplate with envious discomposure the reward of resignation and virtue; and as the result speaks truth to the soul, so may they derive an exciting stimulus to benevolence, by the dismal catastrophe of the ungenerous, the inhuman, and the uncharitable.

“The rich man died also, and was buried.” Here was a period likewise to the festivity of his enjoyments. Great as the contrast may appear in regard to the temporal circumstances of these opposite characters, yet far beyond measure greater is their final sentence represented in the parable. Surrounded as the latter was with affluence and joy, and in the very meridian of extravagance, denying the smallest pittance to the indigent; trusting in his goods, and boasting in the multitude of his riches; *here* he laments the reverse of his state, and deplores the folly of his inconsiderateness and guilt. The long despised lesson of eternal justice, the derided oracles of equitable adjustment, the neglected cautions of religious wisdom, were

*now* no longer in his power. Deaf to instruction when the book of life was open; incredulous, obstinate, and presuming; fearless of danger, and regardless of duty, when the words of truth were available; he *now* perceives the sin of infidelity, without the means of obviating its effects. Irreversible sentence is passed upon his actions, and the record closed for ever. Indignant in punishment, and yet stung with the keenest bitterness of remorse, he petitions the smallest respite from his pain—the most trifling alleviation of his anguish. “Father  
 “ Abraham, (*says he*) have mercy on me,  
 “ and send Lazarus, that he may dip the  
 “ tip of his finger in water, and cool my  
 “ tongue; for I am tormented in this  
 “ flame.” But how could *he* expect mercy, who never *showed* mercy? How could *he* solicit *pity*, from whom the most miserable *never* experienced *compassion*? The decisions of future judgment, as they are impartial, so are they immutable also: and as in this life we have capability of effecting our happiness hereafter, and upon our

own conduct alone depends the issue, (for God has no respect of persons,) so does this principle evince the justice of divine administration at the time of universal retribution; when neither difference of nation, nor peculiarity of country, nor elevation of birth, nor loftiness of honours, will be admitted as an excuse for disobedience *here*, nor plead an exemption from punishment hereafter. The appeal of the rich man was silenced by the powerful argument of equitable proceeding, and his petition rejected by the awakening memorial of his former prosperity and transgressions:—"Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things:" merciless as thy conduct was *then*, pitiless is thy complaint *now*;—miserable as was his situation in the world, glorious is the reward of his religious faith, and patient resignation in heaven: "now *he* is comforted, and *thou* art tormented." Nor can the sentence be revoked; for "besides all this between you and us," between the wick-

ed and the righteous, “there is a great  
 “gulf fixed; so that they which would  
 “pass from hence to you cannot; neither  
 “can they pass to us that would come  
 “from thence.”

Relying upon the promises interpreted in a literal or false sense; and vainly imagining an exclusive freedom from temporal judgments, as the children of Abraham, and the descendants of the much favoured patriarchs; the Jews (to whom this parable was more immediately addressed) might have no less imagined an exclusive exemption likewise from future punishment, upon the same degree of presumption. The inference then deducible from the words of Abraham, in answer to the rich man's petition, was fully contradictory of such erroneous expectation which might have prevailed: and the words themselves could not but have indicated the universality of final retribution both to the Jew and the Gentile,—the observers of the Mosaic law, and the disciples of the

Christian dispensation. “ Father Abraham, “ have mercy on me !” was the supplication of a sentenced sufferer undeserving of pity. The denial of the request was positive, and the justice of the denial explained : and as a means of overturning any unwarrantable opinion, and remove any deceptibility which the reasoning of philosophy might have advanced, or the tenets which any particular sect might have entertained injurious to the doctrine of divine revelation, an unalterable condition in a future state is most forcibly asserted. “ Between us and you there is a great gulf “ fixed.” The rewarded good are so super-eminently exalted to the height of glory ; and the requited evil so irretrievably sunk in the lowest depth of darkness ; that the probability of variation or change is no less inconsistent in thought, than vainly to expect (what is totally impracticable) a perfect co-adaptation of two contradictory opposites. “ They that would pass from hence “ to you cannot ; neither can they pass to “ us that would come from thence.” The



doctrine of the Scriptures could not have been misunderstood ;—the great alternative of life or death rested upon certain conditions, not to be relaxed, not to be avoided. No compulsion destroyed the liberty of choice, no impelling necessity directed the determination ; and as ignorance of duty could not have been pleaded in extenuation of disobedience, the sentence of equity could not be over-ruled by an application for unmerited compassion. The transactions of his former life could not be recalled ; and as the judgment passed was irreversible, so likewise was his state unchangeable and lasting.

The request of the rich man, that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house to testify to his five brethren the inevitable consequence of sin, lest *they* also should suffer the pains which *he* endured, was answered with the observation of uncontradictory wisdom ; and the refusal was urged by the strongest assertion of argumentative truth. " They have Moses and the prophets," saith

the great dispenser of God's righteous judgments, "let them hear" and obey "them:" for "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, "neither will they be persuaded though one "arose from the dead." The assurances they have already in the writings of the law; and the cautions they may derive from the solemn pledges of their religious instructors, whom they regard as especial persons sent from God, are sufficient, satisfactory, and certain. No further attestation of facts so uniformly declared can be allowed; nor is it supposable that the evidence of a messenger sent from the dead, nor the continuation of repeated miracles, will remove their prejudices, or promote their repentance; when every means of reformation are neglected, and obstinacy and vice exclude their conviction and belief.

The application of the whole parable is no less a subject of serious consideration to *us*, than it was of the greatest importance to *them* who were hearers of it. Our sources of information are increased, and our

dependency and confidence more sure; and as our obstinacy and unbelief prevent our adherence to faith and good works, so have we reason to expect the greater degree of punishment: “for, to whom much is given, of them also much will be required.” “And how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?”

*Here* we have a crowd of awful reflection bursting upon the mind, worthy observation, and meriting our profoundest thought. *Here* we may consider the general transactions in the world; the utility of wealth; the abuse of power; the motives to benevolence; the incitement to virtuous actions: *Here* we may consider the inlets to future infelicity as originating in vice, and the abandonment of virtuous principles: for as “the Scriptures are they which testify of God,” so do they incite us by every argument of truth, to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness;” and they assure us that “he who in these things serveth Christ, is ac-

“ceptable to God and approved of men.”  
*Here* may we likewise justify the dispensations of Providence; reconcile the seeming harshness of the divine economy; assert the imbecillity of human judgment; and vindicate the Almighty from the imputation of injustice. “For though a sinner do evil an  
 “hundred times, (says the enlightened author of Ecclesiastes) and though his days  
 “be prolonged, yet surely I know that it  
 “shall be well with *them* that fear God;  
 “but it shall not be well with the *wicked*.”  
 And the day cometh when discernment shall be made between the just and the unjust; “between him that serveth God,  
 “and him that serveth him *not*.”

Though such are the determinations of supreme wisdom, and such the clear evidences of the revealed will of God, yet man will not hear, neither will he regard, the counsels of the Most High. Weak and dependent as he is; incapable of affixing all things to the purity of their first cause, or of adjudging the propriety of acting from

its tendency to a proper effect; he assumes a prerogative of decision, unbecoming, daring, and presumptuous. Limited in the operation of his faculties, and contracted in the powers of his understanding, he is too vain to admit his insufficiency, and too conceited to acknowledge his error. Pride interferes where humility should preside, and the well-attested truths of the Scriptures are contradicted by the rashness of false conclusion: and as the wisdom of the Almighty is questioned by the vanity of human *pride*, his goodness is no less arraigned at the bar of human *weakness*.

In the daily occurrences of life, we cannot but become spectators of misery and happiness, in the different characters of the virtuous and the ill-disposed; the children of penury and favorites of more auspicious fortune; the poor man begging miserably at the gate, and the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day;—and from such an intermixture of evil and good we too readily draw inferences undeservedly erroneous.



Integrity contending with power, and overwhelmed by authority; innocence assailed by vice, and overcome by stratagem; virtue depressed by affliction, and ridiculed by contempt; hunger, imploring the offals of luxurious extravagance, and spurned with insolence and disdain; affords a picture of human wretchedness, unnatural but not unfrequent; deplorable, and yet too common.

But though such are the transactions in this variegated scene of life; though such the mutability of sublunary affairs; such the epitome of the world; are we therefore justified in the unwarranted assertion, that God careth not for his creatures; but disregards both the sufferings of the innocent, and the crimes of the guilty—the pangs of the virtuous and the revelry of the vicious? Are we therefore impiously to affirm that all things are derived from fortuitous contingency, or happen as the result of absolute necessity?—*no, by no means*; serious reflection will not hazard an opinion



so fraught with wickedness, so dishonourable to God, and so derogatory of his justice. That in some cases poverty should abound, and in others that riches should be enjoyed ; that to one man should appertain independence and honours, whilst calamity and afflictions are experienced by another, is neither incompatible with the goodness, nor repugnant to the equity of the Almighty : since in many instances, as a natural consequence derived from a natural cause, such a distribution of evil and of good could not be prevented without an infringement upon freedom, and upon choice : and without some especial interference which would overturn both, there must be one event to the wicked and the good ; to the just and to the unjust. Unprejudiced observation will discern multifarious misery originating in licentiousness, and the majority of afflictions proceeding from the source of unrestrained passion ; and though the acknowledged hand of Providence may occasionally become conspicuous, and the danger of an offended God may be traced in par-

ticular dispensations without difficulty and without scruple, yet the permission of partial evil should ever be regarded as the salutary correction of wickedness, or the well-intended trials of our virtue and obedience. If there were *no suffering*, where would be the test of our resignation? where the triumph of our patience? If *no temptation* to allure us, no *solicitation* to invite from duty, the struggles of fortitude, and the victory of resistance, would be illaudable and nugatory. If *all* were equal, if *all* were fortunate,—no calamity to sue for pity, no wretchedness to claim compassion, no Lazarus to implore the rich man's bounty,—the feelings of sympathy would answer no purpose, and the keenness of sensibility would be painful without usefulness.

The affections of the mind are implanted in our nature for the purposes of benevolence and social intercourse,—to encourage, to stimulate, and to enforce every principle of kindness, every action of humanity. And as the gifts of fortune are

casual and uncertain, denied to *one* and enjoyed by *another*, the affections of the heart become instrumental of good from their natural tendency in exciting commiseration, where apathy might otherwise too frequently obtain. Riches or poverty may be accounted harmless and indifferent in themselves, neither recommendatory of God's favour, nor subjecting us to his displeasure; they are needful, they are unavoidable, they are beneficial; but for our conduct under *each*, we are finally to be judged. The condemnation of the rich man is not to be ascribed to the extrinsical circumstance of his station, nor punishment to be reckoned as the award of his wealth only. He had received his *good things*, and might have enjoyed them with impunity; for as a virtuous life is not inconsistent with elevated rank, he might have ensured his future happiness by compliance with those reasonable duties attached to his exalted station. Ingratitude to his Maker, and abuse of power, may be accounted as the cause of his destruction; and these speak the

equity of the sentence. Nor was the reward of glory affixed to the unhappy beggar who was laid at his gate, as the necessary consequence of his receiving *evil things*; since no station of life, however indigent and low, can be exempt from peculiar obligations, for the neglect of which all men are equally amenable to future judgment. But as his patience was equal to his sufferings; as his resignation was becoming his affliction, and his obedience and submission paramount to secular consideration, his departure was in peace: he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; he was comforted for his well-endured perseverance in the paths of virtue.

Whatever may be the design of God in permitting the wicked sometimes to have an ascendancy over the righteous; whatever his intentions in permitting vice occasionally to triumph over virtue, whilst prosperity no less characterises the temporal concerns of the one than adversity describes the calamities of the other;—what-

ever contradiction of justice may be rashly presumed from such an economy of dispensations; the gloom of despondency may be removed, and the hopes of the dejected may be established, by the faithful assurances of a better life. In so mixed a society, there must ever exist a promiscuous allotment of good and evil:—of prosperity and adversity. Riches must abound, though poverty much more abounds. But poverty should never be considered as an indication of righteousness, nor should riches be accounted to stamp the character of ungodly upon the possessors. Industry, frugality, and virtue, may be rewarded; whilst idleness, prodigality, and vice, may suffer want, and affliction, and punishment. The wickedness of a parent may bring misery upon the offspring; and future generations lament the result. Not that the innocent in fact are punished for the crimes of the guilty; but, in the course of human affairs, they cannot but deplore that indigence which appertains to them from original extravagance and transgression. Though vice may for a season



prosper, and wax strong, yet in the end is it confounded, and becomes weak. Though violence and extortion may amass wealth, and be greedy; yet riches shall make to themselves wings and flee away, and greediness no longer avail.

If such is the common lot of humanity; if such the occasional consequences derivable from certain vices; reason may in many instances ascertain the source of affliction, and, as it acknowledges the justice of the *effect*, forbear to admit the folly of complaining as the *cause*. But though in the general economy observable in the world “all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked;” yet the dispensations of Providence still remain just, and equitable, and good; they are the trials of our patience, and the tests of our virtue. In proportion to our ability, so is our obligation likewise to do good; to remember in our lifetime, that, as we have received our *good things*, it is our duty to administer to those who receive their



*evil things* ; to work while it is called day, for the night cometh when no man can work, and as we receive freely, freely to give ; for without charity, which implies every degree of holiness, “ no man shall “ see the Lord.”

The contrasted difference of the two characters represented in the parable, whether in respect to their temporal or eternal state, exhibits a picture of instructive tendency both moral and religious. Viewed in a *temporal* light, every feeling of compassion, and benevolence, and pity, is alive to the sufferings of the *one* ; whilst the strongest detestation is aroused by the inhumanity portrayed in the character of the *other*. Should we survey it in the *eternal* change which succeeded, the reverse of circumstances, so accurately descriptive, and so majestically awful, appears truly animated, interesting, and discriminative. The proud son of prosperity cannot contemplate the alteration without horror, nor can the patient child of adversity consider it without comfort and

without hope. *Each* may be convinced of his respective duties in this world ; and *both* may be urged to the performance of them, as they value the blessings of virtue, or dread the sad consequences of vice, in another.

Nor is the heart alone concerned in the examination of this picture. The understanding is likewise informed by wisdom ; the powers of reason are excited ; the faculties of the mind expanded ; and every good affection of the soul is instructed, invigorated, and established. To direct the rich man in the proper disposition of those good things he enjoys, and to encourage the poor man with resigned acquiescence to those evils which he may sustain,—submission to the dispensations of Providence, and reliance upon the goodness of an all-gracious God,—are represented as the efficient sources of satisfaction under the former ; whilst charity and kindness and pity are disclosed, as the genuine purposes for which the *latter* are given : and mournful and deplorable as the event may be, the conclusion is just,

and equitable, and righteous.—“ Ye have  
“ Mose sand the prophets; hear them :”  
Ye have the power of the Gospel; respect  
its commands: Ye have the example of  
*Christ*; walk steadfastly in his steps: Ye  
have doctrines, and exhortations, and pre-  
cepts; reverence their authority, and ob-  
serve their injunctions. If they neither  
animate, nor instruct, nor convince; if ye  
do not hear, nor obey *them*; “ neither  
“ will ye be persuaded though one arise  
“ from the dead.”



## SERMON VII.

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### PSALM xxvii. 15.

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I SHOULD UTTERLY HAVE FAINTED: BUT THAT I BELIEVE VERILY TO SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

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SO elegant in expression,—so consoling in precept,—so truly interesting and instructive are the compositions of the royal Psalmist; that they cannot become too much the object of our admiration, or too frequently the subject of our more serious study. Dignified and sublime in their language, they present the most extensive field of valuable reflection; they afford an expanse of increasing pleasure to the understanding, wherein reason may expatiate without labour, and the mind may derive instruction without fatigue.

In the fervent ejaculations of the inspired Penman are exhibited the most amiable traits of religious confidence, and animated gratitude. They pourtray likewise the lively feelings of an exalted mind pouring out the strains of eloquent sorrow, relieved by the comforts of pious resignation and of prayer. Such models of piety, such exemplars of devotion, can never be perused without benefit, or imitated without advantage. In success they teach us thankfulness and humility;—in affliction they inspire us with hope;—in our troubles they administer consolation;—and in the darkest hour of accumulating distress they fortify the soul with patience, by pointing out the God of our salvation. “Hold thee still in  
 “the Lord, and abide patiently upon him,  
 “but grieve not thyself at *him* whose way  
 “doth prosper;”—“for the arms of the un-  
 “godly shall be broken, and the Lord up-  
 “holdeth the righteous.”—“O tarry thou  
 “the Lord’s leisure,” says the Psalmist,  
 “be strong, and he shall comfort thine  
 “heart; and put thou thy trust in the



“ Lord.”—Wait the appointed time of Providence, till the few and evil days of our pilgrimage pass away ; till we arrive (as the benevolent expositor \* beautifully illustrates the passage) at the mansions prepared for us, in the house of our heavenly Father ;—till our warfare be accomplished, and terminate in the peace of God ;—till the storms and tempests of wintry time shall give place to the unclouded calm and the ever-blooming pleasures of eternal spring.

When assaulted and encompassed by his enemies ;—when surrounded by his most inveterate foes, who sought after his life ;—when harassed with incessant dangers, and distracted with the tumult of war ; David flies to religion as his refuge, and resorts unto his God as the house of his defence, and his castle ;—his shield from danger, and the rock of his might. “ The Lord “ is my light,” says he, “ the Lord is my “ salvation ; whom then shall I fear ?—He

\* Bishop Horne’s Commentary, Psalm xxvii.

“ is the strength of my life, of whom then  
 “ shall I be afraid ?”

The afflictions of life are not confined to age, to nation, nor to rank, but trouble is the birthright of humanity.—And as every condition of life is obnoxious to its own peculiar evil, whilst nature itself is encompassed with common infirmity; the comforts of religion are no less unbounded also; they are neither partial nor restrained. The treasures of divine wisdom and goodness are precluded from none;—they are tendered to all;—they are open to every individual.—God is no respecter of persons; he is merciful to all them that call upon him faithfully:—He will deliver the poor when he crieth, the needy also, and him that hath no worldly helper. It cannot therefore be inapplicable to our subject, nor unuseful in our meditation, to reflect upon the gracious means whereby the Sovereign Disposer of events hath afforded consolation to the more dejected, but not less regarded children of his providence.

In the enumeration of multifarious benefits conferred upon mankind by our blessed Saviour when upon earth; what ever regard he paid to their outward sufferings, his compassion to *external* wretchedness did not supersede his bounty towards their *internal* or moral darkness; his mercy supplied their *spiritual*, as his goodness relieved their *natural* wants. The wonderful propagation of the Gospel, and the superior happiness derivable from his religion, are classed among those miracles of his power which pronounced him the Son of God. “Go your way,” says the Divine Author of Christianity to the disciples of the Baptist who came to inquire of him, “Art thou he that should come, “or look we for another?”—“Go your “way, and tell John what things ye have “seen and heard:—how that the blind see, “—the lame walk,—the lepers are cleansed, “—the deaf hear,—the dead are raised;— “to the poor the Gospel is preached:—and “blessed is he whosoever shall not be of- “fended in me.”

The melancholy catalogue of unfortunate events to which we are continually subject; the natural as well as incidental evils to which we are exposed; the various and diversified temptations which on every side assail us, cannot but teach the necessity of our reliance upon that Supreme and Almighty Being, whose goodness is willing, and whose power is able, to protect us from danger; who, like as a father pitieth his own children, pitieth *them* likewise that fear him, and keep his commandments. Since the introduction of Christianity, we have received more especial aid, and can no longer doubt to whom we may refer for help in our heaviness, or to whom we may fly for refuge in the moment of temptation; “for God so loved the world, that he gave  
 “his only begotten Son, to the end that all  
 “that believe in him should not perish,  
 “but have everlasting life:” and as his invitation bespeaks the most unbounded love to mankind, so should his offers of grace be accepted with gratitude and with joy.—  
 “Come unto me, all ye that labour and

“are heavy laden,”—whose sorrows are increased by sin, or whose natural evils are augmented by spiritual inquietude, “and  
 “I will refresh you;—learn of me, for I  
 “am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall  
 “find rest unto your souls.”

However aggravated the sufferings of the indigent may be, or however heightened their sorrows, Christianity will administer comfort by its doctrines, and consolation by its promises.—It holds forward to our view the glories of a better world, where all sighing shall be done away, and true happiness succeed;—it teaches us to bear our tribulations with patience, and rely upon Providence for support in this variegated passage to eternity. Faith in our Redeemer, and obedience to the will of our Maker, will alleviate our momentary sufferings in this life, and entitle us to reward in that which is to come.

Should we consider the various sources from whence our afflictions flow; the cares,



the troubles, the distresses which in our private or public stations we continually labour under; how we are injured and oppressed by some, vilified and traduced by others; deceived in our warmest expectations; neglected, trifled with, and insulted; our good deeds depreciated by calumny, and our faults aggravated by falsehood:—and withal how difficult it is to meet the fostering hand of disinterested kindness to shield us from the storms of adversity, and protect us from the frowns of assuming pride: we may regard the Apostle's reflection as the strongest consolation in our present sorrows, “that though all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, nevertheless, according to the *promise*, we look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:” for, “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

Should we consider the uneasiness we sustain from the loss of those friends, whom the ties of nature, congeniality of disposition,



or the pleasures of social intercourse, have endeared to us by the strongest cement of undissembled affection; should we reflect upon the numerous hardships we sometimes encounter from adventitious causes, arising from education, from diffidence, or acute sensibility; how irksome the task of solicitation, and how cutting the refusal of our requests! Should we reflect upon the necessity of temporal provision; the difficulty, the labour, the fatigue, and the uncertainty which occasionally attends our endeavours to provide for ourselves, and for our families; whilst the small *share* of innocent enjoyments, allotted to us, is transitory and uncertain:—we may truly lament with the reverend Patriarch of old, “that few and  
 “evil are the days of the years of our life;  
 “and few of us attain unto the days of the  
 “years of the life of our fathers in their  
 “pilgrimage.”

Nor is this the lot of any particular class of men alone; confined to the inferior orders; or peculiar to the uninformed, or

unsuccessful. It is not the destined condition of the dependent alone, to whom the smiles of fortune are unknown; and from whom the numerous advantages of wealth, of power, of patronage, are withdrawn:—anxiety is not *their* lot only;—inferiority of condition does not monopolize affliction, nor does elevation of rank exclude it.—The great, the wealthy, the wise, feel also their solitudes, their cares, and their troubles; and even though virtue the most endearing, though goodness the most unsullied, though benevolence the most extended, should hold the sceptre of dominion, and deserve the blessings of mankind; yet the feelings of nature cannot be stifled by the externals of royalty itself. The best of monarchs, interested in the welfare of his subjects, and zealous to promote their prosperity, reflects with seriousness upon the importance of his trust, and the difficulties attending its execution. As he derives his authority from divine sanction, he accounts himself amenable to his God for the exercise of that sovereignty with which he is entrusted for

the happiness of his people. He considers the complaints of all alike, and experimentally perceives the impracticability of reconciling contending interests and passions.—And though wisdom and prudence evince the necessity of withstanding the restlessness of the wavering; yet, with the tenderness of paternal affection, he compassionates the common sufferings of his kingdom, whilst he laments his inability to relieve individual sorrows. Nor in the happiest times of peace, of plenteousness, and of national prosperity, is the crown less studded with the thorns of latent inquietude, than emblazoned with the semblance of alluring splendor. The observations of holy Job, then, are fully verified by experience; and his assertion that “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards,” proves a maxim of universal truth, and a subject of general lamentation. Without trust therefore in God,—without reliance upon his mercy,—without resignation to his will,—without hope in his promises;—there would be no asylum for the miserable,—

no consolation for the dejected,—no sanctuary in which dignified uneasiness might take shelter for repose : we should faint, or despair under our afflictions, did we not resort to the God of all comfort ; and despondency would overcome us, did we not “ believe verily to see the goodness of the “ Lord, in the land of the living.”

If then humanity is thus clothed with infirmities ; if we are obnoxious to mental inquietudes as well as to bodily sufferings ; if we are beset with evils on every side, from within and from without ; and no station, no condition is free from its own peculiar calamity : surely some useful lesson may be deduced from a rational contemplation of human weakness and afflictions. Nor will any thing tend more effectually to diminish the sorrows of life, and make its natural load less galling to us, than considering them as the consequence of our own disobedience ; the effect of God’s goodness, rather than injustice ; and a strong argument in favour of a future state of retri-

bution, when all things shall be equitably adjusted by the decisions of unerring wisdom.

If as sinners we deserve punishment; (and who will contend for self-uprightness which merits reward ?)—if as sinners we are subject to the penalty annexed to transgression, it can ill become the criminal to strive against his judge; the creature against his Creator; or the thing formed, to say unto him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?—Humility will rather endure affliction with patience, and rely upon Providence to remove it. For “ God will not “ do wickedly, neither will he pervert “ judgment.” He “ is righteous in all his “ ways, and holy in all his works;” he will not acquit the wicked, neither will he by any means clear the guilty.

The chastisements of the Lord, as they proceed from the fountain of all goodness, should be understood as the just correctives of man’s disobedience; since, whilst they display the anger of God against sin, they act



as the means of reformation, which may produce eventual happiness :—they are the awakening though afflicting calls of Providence, to remind us of our frailties, and to incite us to that proper sense of duty which will be our comfort, and our satisfaction.—For as prosperity may be deemed the parent of sin, from the natural influence which it has upon our pride ; so affliction may not improperly be called the school of prudence, as it teaches the necessity of dependence upon the Almighty. Prosperity heightens our presumption, whilst affliction subdues the haughtiness of our spirit ; and as the former tends to the increase of wickedness, the latter seldom fails of instruction by presenting the true picture of human weakness, and pointing out the distorted features of sin which have been concealed under the guise of pleasure.

“ Despise not thou the chastening of the  
 “ Lord,” says the Apostle, “ nor faint when  
 “ thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the  
 “ Lord loveth he chasteneth :” and as an



encouragement and persuasive motive to patience, he affirmeth, that though “no chastening, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” And surely we should submit with lowliness to that *natural* evil which God graciously inflicts upon us by way of some atonement for *moral* evil; since we are assured that he punisheth in mercy, and will, in the end, make all things work together for the good of those who love him and keep his commandments.

That the happiness of mankind was the primary intent of the Almighty in creating them; and that his kindness is still visible in their preservation, cannot be doubted: and, however mysterious the economy of his appointments may appear, we shall find that his ways are equal, though his judgments are unsearchable. Nor can it appear possible, in the nature of things, that man could exist with any degree of com-

fort without principles of religious faith; and without that dependence upon his God which necessarily alleviates the troubles of the sorrowful. The permission of those evils, which we too rashly condemn, acts as the buoy to the mariner, which directs him with safety upon the ocean, and points out the dangers of his voyage. The dispensations of Providence are as the antidote to the poison. They reclaim the sinner; they confirm the penitent; they improve the virtuous; they establish the good; they prepare us against the hour of death: and, whether suitable or unsuitable to our inclinations, they are the wise purposes of *him* who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.

“It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth  
 “him good,” should be the language of every one who believes that there is a God. “Thy will be done,” O God! should be the pious ejaculation of every sincere Christian under trouble:—for he that spared not

his own Son, but gave him up for us all; how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?—To supplicate the throne of grace for the removal of temporal affliction is by no means evil; by no means indicates impatience:—it is our duty—it is a test of our dependence—it is enjoined as an act of religious worship. When the blessed Redeemer of the world was in the extremity of distress; when his soul was sorrowful, even unto death; he fell on his face, and prayed: “O my Father!” said he, in the agony of his suffering, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt: if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” And *herein* he hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.”

It would require but a small degree of humility to believe that that Almighty Being, who formed us out of the dust of the earth; who created us with a design to happiness; who hath hitherto preserved us

through all the various dangers and difficulties of life; who supported us in our infancy, and protected us in our manhood; whose goodness is universal, and whose mercy extendeth throughout the ages of eternity:—it will require but a small degree of humility to believe that *he* alone knoweth what is fittest for us; what is most conducive to our welfare; most essential to our real advantage; and will act according to his goodness, and according to his knowledge.

Though affliction may be the inheritance of man in this life; though his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn; yet should he not reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith he can do no good. The comforts of religion should console his anguish; the promises of the Gospel should dissipate his gloom; his despondency should be removed by faith, and his fortitude wax strong with hope: the pattern of all excellence should excite him to obedience, and the

patience of his Redeemer give courage to his good resolutions. Christ himself, the great exemplar of righteousness; the perfection of all goodness; the author of eternal salvation, in whom was no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth; though he were the Son of the Most High; yet, in his human capacity as man, committed himself to *him* who judgeth righteously, and learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And as the religion of Christ is founded on the doctrine of the cross, and Christ himself first suffered before he entered into his glory; so we who are his disciples, under whose banners we have enlisted, and whose name we are proud to bear; if we would *deserve* the rewards of future bliss, should become followers of *him* in patience, in meekness, in humility, in resignation to our heavenly Father.—The Saviour of the world despised the contradiction of sinners; when reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; in all things he was made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted:

he took the infirmities of our nature, and bare the sicknesses of humanity. Hungry, and weary, and tempted, and not having where to lay his head; no fretfulness was heard, no complaining came from his lips; strengthened with the firmest energy of religious faith, he sustained every agony which malice could invent, or ingenuity could contrive;—for the iniquity of his people, he freely submitted to the punishment of ignominious crucifixion.

Could any thing inspire us with courage, or divest us of cowardice,—could any thing enkindle our ardour, or fire us with emulation,—surely *such* an example must invigorate our spirits, and enforce our resolution. As imitators of Christ, though our trials are less, and our sufferings lighter, yet have we temptations to resist, and tribulations to endure: but with *him* should we likewise bear up against the afflictions of the world with fortitude;—with *him* should we look forward with religious hope;—with *him* should we trust in the sure mer-



cies of the Almighty. Though our afflictions may be many, and our calamities grievous, yet should we be faithful unto death, that in the end we may be rewarded with a crown of life. For “if we suffer, “we shall also reign with him; but if we “deny *him*, he will also deny *us*.”

Whatever difficulties may arise from the consideration of the natural evils abounding in the world; or however we may be disposed to arraign the economy of Providence in permitting the chastisements of his anger to obtain; we shall find his goodness is equal to his justice, and the ultimate end of his dispensations is the salutary correction of mankind. Though the cup of joy may be embittered with the dregs of sorrow, and the draught of happiness may be blended with the ingredients of affliction, noxious to the palate, and unpleasant to the taste, the mixture itself is powerful in its operation, and salutary in its effects. As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord our God chasteneth us; “that he may humble

“ us, and prove us, and do us good at our  
 “ latter end.”

“ It is good for me that I have been in  
 “ trouble,” says the royal Psalmist, “ that I  
 “ might learn thy statutes ; for before I was  
 “ troubled I went wrong, but *now* have I  
 “ kept thy word.” Dazzled with the sun-  
 shine of prosperity, and rejoicing in the ful-  
 ness of earthly grandeur, he thought within  
 himself that he *never* should be moved :—  
 occupied as he was in the constant pursuit  
 of delusive joys, and exhilarated with the  
 expectation of continued delight, the suc-  
 cession of pleasures arrested every thought  
 of his mind, and estranged him for a season  
 from the duties of religion. But when the  
 cloud of tempestuous darkness overtook  
 him ; when the lowering shade of calamity  
 came upon him, and adversity marched  
 onward with a dismal train of afflictive  
 scourges ; when the Lord turned his face  
 from him, *then* was he “ troubled, and went  
 “ mourning all the day long.” The voice  
 of his former merriment was drowned in

plaintive strains of woe; the phantom of alluring pleasure passed as a meteor before his eyes, and vanished from his sight; the knowledge of his weakness produced a sense of his duty, and apprehension of his danger: convinced of his errors, and satiated with the follies of his youth, he called his own ways to remembrance, and turned his feet unto the testimonies of the Lord. Roused from a lethargy of infatuated thoughtlessness, he made haste, and prolonged not the time to keep the commandments of his God: he acknowledged the equity of his judgments, and confessed that of very faithfulness he had caused him to be troubled.

Since affliction is natural to humanity, and no man exists without some share of uneasiness and calamity, Religion must be considered as the best preservative from those temporal disquietudes which corrupt our enjoyments, and embitter the cup of life; for “her ways are ways of pleasantness, “and all her paths are peace.”—*Here we*

have no continuing city,—no stable abode ; this world is only as a passage to happiness, and not the seat of permanent felicity. *Here* we are probationary only ;—*here* trouble is our inheritance, and temptation becomes the touchstone of our fidelity and virtue. Without religion, then, we should become wretched, and inconsolable ; without hope, desponding and perplexed :—calamity would oppress us,—afflictions overwhelm us,—and our suffering be greater than humanity could sustain.

But though tribulation may abound, and infirmities oppress us, the promises of the Gospel are sure, and the blessings of the righteous held forward as incitements to obedience. In this vale of sorrow, though natural evils may affect us, and perplexities surround us, yet are we not left destitute of comfort ;—assistance to withstand temptations is not denied us, or the power of conquering them taken away. The invisible operation of the Holy Spirit calms every pang of the righteous, and sanctifies every

temporal blessing:—even in the hour of death, when the wicked are tormented with the agonizing dreads of futurity, the righteous are at rest;—they are refreshed with the beams of Divine Grace, and animated with the lively hopes of immortality in the kingdom of heaven. They look forward with joy, and satisfaction, and eagerness, and delight, for the attainment of their hopes; and, in the sincere profession of Christianity, and the firmest reliance on the merits of their Redeemer, they “believe verily to  
“ see the goodness of the Lord in the land  
“ of the living.”





## SERMON VIII.

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### ROMANS V. 12.

BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND  
DEATH BY SIN; AND SO DEATH PASSED UPON ALL  
MEN, FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED.

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WHEN the Creator of the world was pleased to call man into existence; when he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and, by enduing him with the faculty of reason, he graciously imparted to him a ray of his divine excellence; nothing could have produced so stupendous a display of Omnipotence, but the principle of efficient goodness; nothing could have executed so glorious a system of universal perfection but the operations of infinite Wisdom.

Eternally happy in himself, without beginning and without end, God could not be

acted upon by any other cause, since *he* alone was of himself from everlasting to everlasting. His happiness could not be diminished, nor increased, since unalterable felicity was essential to his very being. Nor could the fulness of his majesty be extended, since he “filleteth all in all;”—“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;”—he is the only God.

Human weakness then is lost in the contemplation of the Almighty's works;—human understanding shrinks from the task of exploring the depth of his wisdom, and the purposes of his will:—such knowledge is too wonderful for us; we cannot attain unto it. But yet, however mysterious, however inexplicable the cause which produced such transcendent effects, the certainty of their production by some superior power, as the author of them, demonstrates that the whole universe is under the conduct of a mighty

intelligence; and must argue the necessity of some certain duties required of the creature, as acts of homage due to the supreme Creator. Nor can we arrive at that knowledge of our duty without considering the debt we owe, as well for the blessings of our redemption as for the work of our creation.

The theories of ancient philosophy can no longer give rise to speculative and absurd opinions concerning the origin of the world. Tradition, recorded by the pen of inspired truth, and handed down to the latest posterity, informs us of whatever was deemed requisite to be known for our instruction, or to be understood for our edification; though the brightness of eternal glory is veiled from our eyes, and the inscrutable mysteries of the divinity are concealed.

“In the beginning,” says the favoured historian of the creation, “God created the heaven and the earth.” Such is the clear

record of an event the most wonderful; specified in terms the most familiar, the most forcible, the most intelligible. To have assigned reasons for such a manifestation of power would have been presumptuous; to have adduced suppositions would have evinced a principle of assuming arrogance by no means becoming, and utterly inconsistent with humanity.

God spake the word, and the heavens were made:—He said, *let it be*, and the worlds were framed. Nor was his goodness or his power limited to the formation of the heavens and the earth:—"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them."—In the garden of Eden were they placed by the hand of their maker, who blessed them, and gave unto them all that could render their existence comfortable and happy.

Whatever of enjoyment or satisfaction could be conveyed to them through the

medium of sense, was liberally imparted. Whatever of exquisite delight could be derived from the external beauties of the creation, or result from the powers of contemplative reason and improving knowledge, was bountifully granted. No care, no solicitude, no anxiety for the morrow, destroyed the sweetness of their nightly slumbers; no toil, no sorrow, no distrust, embittered the occupations of their day. Boundless were the sources from whence their gratifications flowed. All that God had given was largely theirs. *One* only restriction was imposed upon them as a trial of their virtue; *one* only command as the test of their obedience; nor were they necessarily inadequate to the performance of the stipulation. As their benefits were inestimable, so should have been their returns of dutiful compliance; as their endowments were numerous, abundant were their obligations to their Creator; their thankfulness should have been unremitted, and their obedience without end. But O folly of Ingratitude! amidst the luxuries

of unsullied pleasure, they were discontented ; overcome by pride they transgressed ; they brought down punishment upon themselves ; they bequeathed sin and wretchedness as a fatal legacy to their posterity.

Urged by no compulsory force, they could not allege necessity ; forewarned of danger, they could not plead ignorance in extenuation of their crime. Pure, and spotless, and upright, and perfect, they were created ; they had a liberty of choice, by the different management whereof they might either persevere in their integrity, or deviate from their state of innocence. The *possibility* of falling could not be ascribed as a defect in their nature, since in wisdom were they made ; and without such possibility man must have been a mere machine incapable of virtue, and incapacitated for reward. This was the only probation by which obedience to the divine will could be ascertained, and the means of avoiding a lapse were sufficiently disclosed. Sensual inclinations were to be subservient to the fa-  
cul-



ties of the mind, and the mind was enlightened by divine grace : the passions were to be governed by reason, and reason to be guided by the power of judicious discernment. And as man, from his natural predisposition to whatever might conduce to his immediate welfare, could not have experienced evil till by transgression he had defaced the image of goodness which was impressed upon him, we may fairly conclude that he fell by voluntary disobedience, arising from unresisted temptation ; and, from the freedom of the act, deservedly suffered the privation of those blessings, which in a state of integrity and duty he might have enjoyed uninterrupted and without labour.

The recital of the first fall of man, from a state of innocence to a state of guilt, from the highest degree of earthly happiness to the completion of misery, and the introduction of every wretchedness, is portrayed in Holy Writ with that simplicity

and correctness so peculiar to the writings of the inspired penman.

“ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat ; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt *not* eat of it ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The command was plain, obligatory, and emphatic, “ thou shalt not eat of it.” The penalty annexed to the transgression thereof was no less concise, forcible, and binding, “ thou shalt surely die.” Here was no rigid injunction arbitrarily enforced upon the weakness of man ; nor difficult restraint unreasonably exacted by the power of the Almighty.—With liberty to range untrouled, and with full permission to select and enjoy whatever was grateful, or pleasant, or desirable, the progenitors of the human race were forbidden the fruit of *one* tree only ; nor could this prohibition be

deemed unjust, since their inferiority as creatures required some token of their subjection to their Creator; and the powers of their intellectual faculties must have denoted to them, that obeisance was due to their God.

Seduced by the cunning artifice of a Tempter, insinuating and guileful; stimulated by deceitful appetite; and impelled by the delusive expectation of becoming equal to God in knowledge; Eve plucks the forbidden fruit, and eats.

Adam, still upright and unoffending, but incautious and unwary, listens to the baneful incitements of his partner—resists not the temptation—forgets his duty—receives the treacherous fruit from her hands—joins in the actual breach of the command, and falls a victim to his own disobedience. *Thus* sin entered into the world with all its concomitant evils; *thus* death passed upon all men; for that all, through the transgression of our first parents, were implicated in their sin.

The different objections which have at any time been advanced against the propriety of punishing so *severely* what has been injudiciously denominated so *trifling* a transgression, can never be allowed without impiously subverting a doctrine most incontrovertibly true ; “ that righteous is  
 “ the Lord, and upright are his judgments ;  
 “ that God cannot be tempted with evil,  
 “ neither tempteth he any man ; and far  
 “ be it from God that *he* should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that *he*  
 “ should commit iniquity.”

When the delinquency of our progenitors is considered in that light, which unprejudiced reason and humility should ever consider it ; we can arrive at no other conclusion but what justifies the seeming harshness of the penalty, and evinces both the justness and goodness of the Almighty.

Man was made pure, innocent, and happy ; with freedom to act, and with liberty to choose for himself.—Life or

death—reward or punishment, was set before him. Had the secret interposition of the Deity pre-ordained and pre-determined the conduct of our first parents, freedom of action, and liberty of choice, had been over-ruled, and the duty of obedience rendered nugatory. Since nothing can be deemed a free choice which is forced upon us by some acting cause destroying the power of refusal; as where force is, choice cannot be said to exist; and the denial of any evil, or the acceptance of any good, must solely depend upon the elective power of the will and understanding. And as virtue can never be pre-supposed, where necessity operates to the exclusion of vice; by the same argument we must allow that the violation of any law can never be deemed sinful, when there is no principle of volition to the contrary. Admitting then the freedom of man, as to his election of happiness or misery, depending upon his voluntary obedience, or disobedience; and considering him as possessed with a power of discriminating and



determining for himself; we cannot establish a doctrine so repugnant to common sense, as to argue what is a contradiction; that God should make man a free agent, and yet act contrary to his eternal reason by arbitrarily preventing an evil, which, from the very nature of that free agency, man was not compelled by necessity to commit, but was enabled by reason and by judgment to avoid. As God therefore had given man faculties sufficient to discriminate between good and evil, with free liberty to make his *own* election; and had bestowed upon him blessings to incite his perseverance in duty and in innocence; the breach of the command, “Thou shalt not eat of it,” proceeding from free will, can never be accounted necessary; and the penalty annexed to it, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” can never be deemed cruel, arbitrary, or severe. And as, without violence to his nature, man could not have made choice of evil, in preference to good; the perversion of his reason, and his consequent disobedi-



ence, must alone be imputed as the cause of his future wretchedness, whilst the goodness of God remains unchangeable; and his justice must continue unsuspected.

But though the justice of God may be admitted, and the punishment inflicted upon our first parents may be allowed as equitable; yet it should seem that some further obstacle presents itself to the vain imagination of man, in regard to the miseries entailed upon posterity through the commission of individual guilt. But such speculations are insufficient to controvert the stability of truth; they betray the same degree of obliquity which effected original transgression. The wish to become as God in knowledge was followed by the attempt to realize the wish; and by such an attempt, in direct violation of a special *command*, sin entered into the world;—and as pride was the offence by which guilt was first introduced, so presumption may still counteract the gracious remedies offered for our salvation, and confirm the penalty annexed

to sin, which can alone be removed by sincerity of faith, and practical obedience to the will of God.

“Shall mortal man be more just than God?” was a question proposed by the upright Job, under the influence of temptation and accumulated wretchedness and woe;—assured of his goodness, he doubted not the justice of the Almighty. Nor does it become us, at any time, to investigate with pride the unsearchable wisdom of our Maker, since his judgments are great, and his ways past finding out. Had God, the supreme, the invisible, the all-sufficient Being; the Creator, the Preserver, the Disposer, and Governor of all things both in heaven and in earth; had God made man at first subject to disease, and liable to death, encompassed with infirmities, and obnoxious to evil; and exacted the far more severe conditions than were proposed as a test of his obedience; who could have controuled his power?—who could have denied his equity?—who could have doubted his wisdom?—for “he

“alone is wonderful in council, and he  
“alone is excellent in working.”

For the same reason we presume to arraign the justice of God in depriving us of those blessings enjoyed prior to the fall,—and which we could not have claimed independent of his goodness; for the same may we impute cruelty to the supreme Author of Nature in respect of the inferior creatures of his hand, because the inequality of *their* condition renders them subservient to the dominion of *man*.—But surely such a consideration should have a tendency to promote our gratitude for the happiness we *enjoy*, rather than incite indecent speculations of pride, which censure the providence of God with injustice for that which is *withheld*.

Nor may it be deemed useless and insignificant in argument, to adduce what is common among men, and approved of in the disposition of temporal concerns, as a faint illustration of the doctrine advanced.

For though the wisdom of the divine economy may be subject to animadversion from arrogance, and to censure from ignorance, the deductions of human reason, formed into a systematic code of laws, are sanctioned with the name of justice, and accepted with reverence and approbation.

The promise made to Adam was dependent upon a certain condition to be strictly complied with; nor could he secure the happiness promised, without the performance of the conditional stipulation. And as all men were at that time virtually in Adam, and thus amenable to the covenant; his descendants could not, in equity, be entitled to the blessings of that promise, which *he* had voluntarily forfeited by the breach of the condition. The same case frequently occurs in human transactions; no do we consider any supposed evils which may ensue in particular instances, as paramount to the wisdom of the law itself.— There are few of us but what have suffered from the omission of certain conditional

agreements entered into by our ancestors; and there are many of us who daily commit the same errors, which must ultimately involve our successors in that poverty, which we forcibly deprecate as an act of injustice towards ourselves; for it is no uncommon circumstance in life, that the original title to property is truly forfeited, by the violation of a contract solemnly entered into; so that the future generation is deprived of its contingent advantages.

The constitution of mankind, from whatever cause it arises, seems more generally disposed to seek after objections to that part of the divine economy, which is beyond comprehension; than to admire with thankfulness those immediate revelations of God's will, which he hath graciously made known, and which are more easily understood.—The boasting of natural reason urges man to investigate causes which are mysterious and impenetrable to human wisdom; whilst the most familiar rules enjoined to their practice, and which would be effective of their



happiness, are neglected, ridiculed, or despised. To impute injustice to the Almighty,—to prescribe rules to his eternal will,—to canvass with pride, and dispute with sophistry, the ways of his appointment, is at all times profane;—but to arraign his goodness for enforcing the penalty due to the violation of the strictest compact, which in our own transactions we call equitable, and just, and good, and proper, is profaneness aggravated by the grossest impiety. In this instance we may fairly say, “out of thine own mouth will I judge thee; and by thine own law thou art condemned.” Surely then “God has been just in all that is brought upon us, for he hath done right, but we have done wickedly.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men; for that all,” through the delinquency of Adam, “have sinned.”

Philosophy, degenerated into speculative theory, and subtilized by vain disputations,



is destructive of happiness, and effective of misery. It destroys comfort, where it should administer consolation ;—it deprives wretchedness of hope, when resignation to the will of heaven is the best antidote to temporal calamities : and whilst it weakens the faith of the unwary, it extends the boundaries of vice, by taking away those sanctions which have ever been the surest barriers to virtue.

Fatal experience too strongly evidences the result of original transgression ; we feel it in our natural infirmities. Our passions, our appetites, our inclinations, prove the certainty of the fact beyond dispute, and beyond contradiction. In sorrow do we eat all the days of our life, till we return unto the ground out of which we were taken ; and mortality cries daily in our ears, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” If any thing then can have a tendency to eradicate pride, and excite our humility—if any thing can possibly

conduce towards a proper sense of our duty to God, and a reliance upon his good providence, surely these awful reflections must effect it. That “it is appointed unto men “once to die.” And though “the dust “shall return to the earth as it was, the “spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” And as he will bring every work of man into judgment; so shall we receive punishment or reward according to that which we have done, whether it be evil, or whether it be good.

From the melancholy fall of our first parents much observation may be deduced. The consequence of disobedience to God’s commands should incite us to learn wisdom without pride; and the effect of his goodness should inspire us with humility without despondence, and thankfulness without arrogance. The evil tendency of our own nature, the depravity of our will, and the obliquity of the heart, may instruct us in a lesson of prudential circumspection,

and persevering vigilance, lest we also pluck the forbidden fruit, and eat, as it were, our own destruction.

And since the dispensations of Providence are ever wise and good, and his judgments equitable and merciful, let us not impute cruelty to the Almighty in that we are subject to misery and to death ; but rather let us adore his goodness, that in his infinite mercy he hath redeemed us out of a state of sin, and once more put us into a capacity of obtaining eternal bliss. Let us fear God, and obey his will. With the warmest sentiment of unbounded gratitude, let us praise his holy name ; and in joyful expectation of a future life, “ let us run with patience the race that is set before us ;” and so run as to obtain the prize of immortal glory in the mansions of everlasting peace.



## SERMON IX.

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### LUKE II. 10.

AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM, FEAR NOT: FOR  
BEHOLD I BRING UNTO YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF  
GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE.

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SUCH was the benign, the expressive, the simple exordium, by which the long expected Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind, was announced. Such was the mild declaration of an angel sent from heaven, as the harbinger of peace, and the messenger of glad tidings to the world.

To dissipate the gloom of melancholy; to prepare the mind for the reception of ensuing happiness; to allay the timid expectation of the shepherds, who, at the appearance of an heavenly vision, were sore afraid; and to overcome the despondency

with which they were oppressed : fear was dispersed by the joyous strains of celestial concord ; and salvation proclaimed by the most endearing tenderness, harmony, and love.

At the disclosure of such a manifestation, so replete with comfort, with happiness, and with hope ; no awful testimonies of divine sovereignty were evinced ; no conflict of contending elements was heard ; no peals of thunder, no flashes of terrific lightning to alarm and to confound ; no Sinai shaking from its base, bespoke Omnipotence and wrath. *Here* tenderness and compassion reigned ; *here* goodness smiled ineffable ; *here* mercy triumphed over justice. “ Fear not,” said the herald of pacifick love, “ fear not ; behold I bring you “ good tidings of great joy, which shall be “ to all people : for unto you is born this “ day, in the city of David, a Saviour, “ which is Christ the Lord,”

As the Mosaic dispensation was an insti-



ution of rigour, for wise reasons thought necessary for the peculiar circumstances of the Jews, adapted to their civil polity, and religious worship; so was it promulged in all the sublimity of majestic grandeur, by which their minds might be impressed with reverence, and with awe; and by which their obedience might be enforced with the strongest evidence of irresistible conviction. But as the transcendent mildness of the Gospel was to eclipse the austerity of the law, having the Saviour of the world as its author, and the Redeemer of mankind the preacher of its righteousness; so was the nativity of the incarnate Godhead attended with every circumstance illustrative of so great benevolence. Suddenly, says saint Luke, the inspired reciter of the event, “ suddenly there was with  
 “ the angel a multitude of the heavenly  
 “ host, praising God; and saying, Glory  
 “ to God in the highest, and on earth,  
 “ peace; good will towards men!”

That the appearance of the Son of God,

clothed with humanity, was a design (however surpassing the limits of finite reason to comprehend) worthy the interposition of the Deity, can no *longer* be doubted, than while pride is predominant, and infidelity usurps the throne of more rational humility and belief.

It was no trifling concern, no arbitrary interference, which called Divinity itself from the realms of bliss, and veiled the essential brightness of the Godhead under the form of a servant; which made him decline even the nature of angels, and take upon him the seed of Abraham, and be made in all things like unto man. Neither urged by necessity, actuated by caprice, nor impelled by motives of ambitious splendor, it was no common display of mercy, that induced the Son of God himself to bow the heavens, and dwell among us; to endure the calamities incident to our nature, and participate in the evils of temporal inquietude. Some benevolent purpose was to be effected; some extraordinary consequences to accrue; some

important benefits to be derived from such unspeakable condescension. The mystery is too sublime to fathom ; the truth of it too evident to contradict. Prophecy foretold the gracious intention from the earliest period of creation ; and the completion of the prophecies in every instance, predicting the future coming of a Messiah, establishes the reality of the fact—" God manifest in the " flesh."

When man had transgressed the laws of his Maker, and forfeited his title to eternal happiness ; when he presumptuously ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; of the which it was said, " Thou shalt " *not* eat of it ; for in the day that thou eat-  
" est thereof, thou shalt surely *die*:"—However justice might have required the penalty of disobedience to be put in force, yet mercy prevailed over justice ; and the severity of deserved vengeance gave way to the more endearing attributes of clemency and compassion.

No sooner was innocence defiled by guilt, or the image of purity defaced by the stamp of vice ; but a remedy was promised by which the original likeness might be renewed, and the loss of innocence be supplied by the efficiency of future righteousness.

Bountiful in his goodness, and merciful in his intentions towards the creatures of his hand ; no sooner had man disobeyed the injunctions of his Creator, and by sin incurred the penalty denounced, than God suspended his anger, and graciously condescended to enter into covenant with him. Neither willing to destroy, nor deeming it right to forgive *unconditionally*, he declares the terms by which the dreadful effect of transgression might be avoided, and the means by which his favour might again be restored. Man, fallen from his original uprightness, knew not of himself to repair his state, nor hope reconciliation with his offended Maker : and, unless some mode had been adopted, misery must have been the sure consequence of his fall. “ The seed of the

“woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” was the first tender of infinite mercy, shrouded in mystery, and enveloped in the language of prediction.

Had the terms of forgiveness been ever so severe, the event of reconciliation would have been paramount to the greatest difficulty of terms, and deserving the gratitude of mankind. But when we consider, that however mysterious and incomprehensible the mode which was adopted, yet the covenant itself is consolatory, and advantageous; expressive of God’s love to man, and vindicatory of his own honour, our admiration towards the author of such transcendent goodness should be raised to a more exalted degree of wonder; and our compliance with the terms should be proportionate to the value of that eternal happiness annexed to our obedience.

As the work of our redemption necessarily required the highest dignity in the person of a Redeemer, it was impossible that



any nature singly could have answered this character. No human being alone could be equal to such a stupendous undertaking; nor could God, in conformity to the justice of his laws, admit a sacrifice below the criminality of the offence, as sufficient to expiate the malignity of it.

Far beyond the most extended faculties of man to explain, was the plan of his redemption to be effected; a conjunction of two natures was proposed: that the worthiness of the most perfect Being, and the sufferings of one subject to the weakness of humanity, might meet together, and form one mysterious union. That God and man should be joined in one person; that as *man* he might become a sacrifice for sin, and as *God* make the sacrifice worthy to be accepted: his *manhood* giving a capacity to suffer, and his *Godhead* giving a just value to his sufferings\*. Thus proving his tenderness to mankind by the excellencies

\* *Vide* Sermon on the Humanity of Jesus Christ, by Richard Duke, A. M., Family Lectures, p. 156.



of his wisdom, by finding an expedient how both sin might be punished, and the sinner pardoned; his justice at the same time fully satisfied, and his majesty remain undiminished. And, “in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because “that God sent his only begotten Son into “the world that we might live through “him;” “for it pleased the Father, that “in *him* should all fulness dwell, and by “*him* to reconcile all things unto himself.”

To call the attentive mind to a consideration of the miseries derivable from the disobedience of our first parents, and to enumerate the various and unhappy changes which have taken place among men subsequent to the introduction of sin into the world; would be to hold up a black catalogue of vice, and disgust with the impartial recital of ingratitude, idolatry, and prevailing wickedness. The transactions of the antediluvian world are strongly stigmatized with this memorable record of existing depravity, “That it repented the Lord,

“ that he had made man on the earth, and  
 “ it grieved him at his heart.”

To omit the melancholy repetition of enormities which took place from the period of the first transgression, to the time when the beauteous rainbow proclaimed the covenant between God and man, that “ the  
 “ waters shall no more become a flood to  
 “ destroy all flesh ;” to wave the recital of that iniquity which abounded, till the holy patriarch was called forth as the father of the faithful ; to pass over the enumeration of mercies received by the Israelites, requited only with rebellions aggravated by idolatry and ingratitude ; to leave out a recapitulation of crimes so contradictory of allegiance to their God, so injurious to themselves, and so abhorrent to reason’s first impress, and conclusion : the chance of conviction may be better promoted by a reference to a much later period ; and the consideration of the state of the world at the time our blessed Saviour appeared upon earth, may evince a more salutary, profit-

able, and instructive lesson, by which we may learn wisdom.

When the predicted Immanuel was about to fulfil the accomplishment of long inspired prophecy, and by his nativity complete the covenant of undeserved mercy; the whole of mankind was fitly comprehended under the general denomination of Jew and Gentile. To the former belonged the oracles of truth; to the latter the dawning of reason only. To the *one* as a select and chosen people, the seed of Abraham, appertained in a more peculiar manner the promise of the Messiah; whilst to the other in a more obscure and distant degree, that “in *his* seed should all the nations of the “earth be blessed.”

The records of antiquity convey to us the recital of depravity, and delineate the character of those ages, in terms the most impressive and deplorable. It might be truly said, that mental darkness *was* upon the face of the earth.

The religion of the heathens—if gross idolatry, if sacrifices of cruelty, if tenets of immoral tendency, if barbarism and indecent practices might be deemed worthy such an appellation—the religion of the heathens was despicable and brutal. Greece and Rome indeed, in comparison of more prevailing ignorance, formed a contrast between the blackness of night, and the first glimmerings of the day. But Greece and Rome, great as they have been accounted, still had their vices ; still abounded in corruption ; were still deficient of real knowledge. Their philosophers were human ; their opinions contradictory ; their precepts without sanction ; their best examples inefficacious ; and their most studied arguments, speculative, conjectural, and obscure. Athens blushed not to dedicate an altar “ TO THE “ UNKNOWN GOD.”

The proud superiority of the schools had not taught the first article of nature’s creed ; ignorant of the nature and attributes of the supreme Deity, the boasters of human

science were defective in their conduct; impious in their religious adorations. And, though Socrates, though Plato, though Seneca, shone forth distinguished for sublimity of thought, brilliant in language, and cultivated in sentiment; yet was their light but as the coruscations of the meteor, without stability, and without influence.

Among the general class, what could be expected? Honesty disowns their practices; reason revolts at their crimes. Humanity shudders at their barbarism, and compassion would draw a veil over their enormities. But these things are recorded for our instruction, and “are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”—By *their* folly *we* should learn wisdom; and in contemplating their weakness, *we* should learn to be thankful for that true *strength* which leads to edification and eternal happiness.

Nor is the heavy charge of ignorance; idolatry, and superstition, imputable to the



Gentiles alone; to the infatuated obstinacy of the Jews, much more severe condemnation may be affixed. Perversely rebellious, *one* would not obey the express revelation of their lawgiver; whilst the *other*, self-confident and vain, darkened the powers of reason with the coverings of vicious philosophy. Of the *latter*, favoured above all people, much better things might have been expected; to them was no palliation, no plea for excuse. Selected as the repository of true knowledge, to them the Almighty revealed himself openly; delivered them from servitude; formed them into a nation; gave them a transcript of his divine will; instituted forms for their worship; set before them the strongest incitements to dutiful compliance; promising blessings as a reward of their good conduct, and threatening their transgressions with the most signal marks of his displeasure. “I  
 “call heaven and earth,” saith the Almighty God of truth, “to record this day  
 “against you, that I have set before you  
 “life, and death—blessing and cursing;



“ therefore choose life, that thou and thy  
 “ seed may live.”

Nothing could be more emphatic, nothing more peremptory and strong, than such an appeal; nothing could be more explicit than the command given to this chosen nation. “ Thou shalt fear the  
 “ Lord thy God, and serve him. Ye shall  
 “ not go after *other* gods, of the gods of  
 “ the people which are round about you.  
 “ You shall diligently keep the command-  
 “ ments of the Lord your God, and his  
 “ testimonies and his statutes which he hath  
 “ commanded thee.”

Of *them* some hopes might be entertained, that their progress in virtue would have been equal to their opportunities and advantages; but history speaks far contrary things. A perverse, rebellious, indignant spirit had long been nationally characteristic of the Jews. Some few excepted, the majority were proud, selfish, and intolerant, arrogant by nature, and grown inso-

lent by superior qualifications. By the sophistical arguments and contentious disputes of different sects, the knowledge and power of true religion were almost obliterated. The service of the temple was defiled by an adherence to external forms only. Ceremonies were continued, but godliness was no more. Intoxicated as they were with the love of splendor, and ostentatious in their sacrifices, the law of righteousness failed in its effect. Proud as they were of festivals, alluring to the eye, and captivating with pomp; sanctity of life, purity of morals, and integrity of heart, were forgotten. Justice and mercy, humility and faith, which elevate the soul, and derive blessings from the Almighty, were neglected, or despised. Overbearing, revengeful, and malicious; despising \* the Gentiles, they looked upon the heathen world with contempt and abhorrence; and arrogating to themselves a superior excellence of nature, they almost forgot that they were men.

\* Gisborne on Religion, 8vo. p. 196.

Such was the wretched—such the deplorable state of the world. The Gentiles were overwhelmed in darkness, and deluged with impieties;—the Jews, dilated with pride, debased by carnalities, and scourged with divisions: and the God of heaven and earth provoked with idolatries, with superstitions, with the insults of cruel sacrifice, and licentious offerings. Could divine justice any longer permit such enormity? Could the Almighty suffer the continuance of such crimes, unlimited and uncontrolled? Did not the sufferings and wretchedness of mankind cry out for relief, as their sins cried out for punishment? Was it not time to stop the progress of such depravity, and by some interposition correct the force of increasing woes? *This must be allowed.* It was necessary, it was equitable, it was just; it was for the glory of God, for the good of man, for the salvation of the world. Lamentable indeed must have been the state of succeeding ages, had not the supreme Fountain of Mercy listened to the kind overtures of his beloved Son, who freely

offered himself a sacrifice for sin, to reconcile by his sufferings, and justify by his righteousness. Miserable indeed must they have been, had he not found out some remedy by which to *appease* the anger of offended justice; and, by the power of his majesty, had he not established peace upon the basis of unerring truth: instituting a religion corrective of vice; appointing ordinances efficient of virtue; enlightening the dark corners of the earth by giving the heathen knowledge of his laws; and filling its utmost borders with judgment, and with righteousness.

The fulness of time, pre-determined by everlasting wisdom, was arrived; the prophecies were fulfilled; the term of Daniel was elapsed; the celestial fire of Isaiah shone forth with inextinguishable lustre; the sceptre departed from Judah, and the desire of all nations appeared. *He* truly was the light of the world; and through his Gospel was brought the joyful welcome of pardon, and reconciliation, and life, and immortality.

But though this blessed Saviour, this King of kings, and Lord of lords, this long expected Messiah came into the world; no pomp preceded his entrance, no magnificence proclaimed his approach. He came not the deliverer from Roman bondage, to bind the kings of the earth in chains, as expected by the Jews; or to restore the kingdom to Israel: far otherwise was the errand of this predicted Holy One. He came not to destroy the law, or the prophets, but to fulfil them. He came to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. He came to preach repentance and remission of sins, and was “declared, “to be the Son of God with power, by the “resurrection from the dead.” Behold, said the commissioned angel, which announced the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, “Behold I bring unto you good “tidings of great joy which shall be to all “people; for unto you is born this day, in “the city of David, a Saviour, which is “Christ the Lord.” From the period of his



nativity to his triumph over death, no marks of capricious *dignity* were exercised ; no useless ostentation displayed the *power* of his *majesty* ; no flattering appeal to the passions of men betrayed the *weakness* of his *doctrine*. Miracles of mercy flowed from his compassion ; purity, and meekness, and innocence, were the ornaments of his life ; and glory, and immortality, and eternal happiness, the promises of his Gospel. This then was the Messiah, the Saviour, the Redeemer of mankind ; this was the promised seed which was to bruise the serpent's head. This was the *branch* of the Lord, beautiful and glorious ; “ this was of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

The several and diversified prophecies previous to our blessed Saviour's appearance upon earth received their full completion. According to the divine promise, the long predicted event was accomplished ; and the glad tidings of his birth were announced in hymns of joy. Whatever of characteristic trait, and feature, and circumstance, was



foretold by the prophets as the discriminative marks, by which the true Messiah might be distinguished without controversy or doubt, was in the minutest manner recognized, as well in the person of Christ, as in his life and ministry, his death and resurrection. And since he has performed the glorious errand of divine goodness in redeeming mankind from the slavery of sin; and revealed to them the indispensable necessity of repentance, and faith, and obedience, as the only means by which they can expect to receive pardon, and reconciliation, and acceptance with God: a continuance in sin, therefore, must *now* be proportionably criminal, as the knowledge of its destructive effects is more clearly ascertained, by the plain discovery of the supreme command to the contrary.

The stupendous method of our salvation is sufficiently disclosed; reward and punishment in another life, according to our well or evil doing in this, is assured upon

the veracity of Christ himself, whose divine mission was attested by the most ample and incontestable proofs; by signs, by wonders, and by divers miracles. He was “the way,” and “the truth,” and “the life;” in whom were “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and who, (as it behoved him) by his suffering for us, and rising again from the dead, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations,” proved himself to be verily that person “of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write;” even the true “Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

It is impossible indeed for us in our present state of mental imbecility to have any exact adequate notion of those beatitudes reserved for the righteous; or to understand the nature of the punishment denounced against the wicked: but if any thing can deter us from the path of iniquity, or urge us to “enter in at the straight

“gate which leadeth unto life,” we are not wanting of exhortations, of inducements, of persuasion. We have testimonies to convince us of the happiness attendant upon obedience, and terrors sufficient to display the miseries consequent of transgression. We have encouragements to follow after righteousness, and embrace every virtuous action; whilst suitable assistance and precaution are afforded us, whereby we may oppose the allurements of evil, and overcome vicious inclinations. The enlightening word of truth is among us; “it is not “hidden” in an unknown language, “neither is it far off,” and removed from our examination. It is very nigh unto us, that we may learn “to love the Lord *our* God, “to walk in his ways; and to keep his “commandments, and his statutes, and his “judgments, that we may live.” And as vice is essentially bad, and virtue essentially good; the latter being conducive to that happiness which should be the first object of our wishes to attain, whilst the former is

no less productive of those miseries which cannot but be our aversion and our dread : an attention to the duties which Christianity enjoins becomes our paramount obligation, enforced by every motive of self-interest and of duty. For, as the Gospel of Christ may be properly deemed by metaphor “ a lantern unto our feet, and a light “ unto our paths,” by which we are directed into the ways of peacefulness; it may emphatically be styled also “ the power of “ God unto salvation to every one that be-  
“ lieveth.”

When the light of nature was overpowered by superstition, and the reason of man was enveloped in heathen darkness, there might have been some excuse in palliation of former offences. But of *us*, who have been blessed with the most clear and well-attested revelation of the divine will, and whom “ the Day-spring from on high hath “ visited,” better things are demanded. Ignorance can *now* no longer be pleaded in extenuation of guilt; there is *now* no room

for scruple or uncertainty ; we cannot *now* doubt the testimony of that Almighty Being, whose wisdom is infinite, whose power is irresistible, and whose truth is inviolable. We may *now* assure ourselves by the certainty of Christ's resurrection from the dead, by which he was " declared to be the Son " of God with power ;" that though this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a building eternal in the heavens. Though death may shortly level us with the dust, and our bodies be laid in the cold chambers of the grave ; yet will it not be long, ere death shall lose his sting, and the grave its victory ; ere this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and mortality be swallowed up of life. " Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the " kingdom of their Father," and they that have done evil shall call vainly upon the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them, and hide them " from the face of *him* that " sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath " of the lamb ;" for the day of judgment



cometh, and who shall be able to stand against the wrath of an offended God?

Such is the unerring doctrine of the Scriptures; such the explicit avowal of unalterable veracity; such the immutable determination of the divine counsel; and since we have received likewise of the apostles, by the Lord Jesus, how we ought to walk and to please God, and to abound more and more in all goodness, and holiness, and virtue: wilful disobedience can *now* no longer hope for pardon; nor can obstinate infidelity be considered otherwise, than a crime of the deepest ingratitude aggravated by presumptuous insult, and meriting the severest condemnation. This only is the accepted time; this alone is the day of salvation. Through the tender mercy of God, and by the merits of an all-sufficient Redeemer, we may *yet* be delivered from our sins; we may be sanctified; we may be saved: but if we comply not to the terms *now*, the opportunity is lost for ever—



there is no repentance in the grave. If we will not hearken to the voice of God's mercy while it is in our power, the terrors of his wrath will overtake us in the hour we least expect it. The book of life will be shut; the final sentence be awarded; and "thinkest thou this, O man, that doest such things as are worthy of death, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Be not deceived.—This day, even *now alone*, "life and good, and death and evil," are set before us; the conditions are plainly stated; the covenant is of freedom, not of compulsion; the choice is referred to our own election. And shall inveterate obstinacy destroy the power of all-saving truth? Shall contumacy prevail over reason? Shall the perverseness of infidelity deaden our more serious thoughts, and harden us in sin?—Presumptuous, unfeeling wickedness!—Shall the creatures of frailty despise the extended arm of mercy, and spurn at the gracious hand that offers them relief? Shall they slight the tender of endearing

love, and rebel with impunity against that God who gave his own Son to redeem the world?—Vain, dangerous imagination!—Consider the magnitude of the offence; consider the denunciations against those who laugh contemptuously at religion; who blaspheme the author of our faith; who reject the proffered salvation; and, with the profanest pen of impious scurrility, stigmatize the Gospel of Christ! How wretched, how deplorable must their fate be, who, neither listening to the voice of wisdom, nor seeking the kingdom of God themselves, prevent others from entering in, and heap destruction upon their fellow-creatures!—*Such* sin with accumulative guilt, and accumulated must their punishment be also. Perverse depravity, *thus* to defy the living God! Unpitying inhumanity, *thus* wantonly to destroy the souls of unthinking men!—Let the thoughts of an *hereafter* arouse every feeling of the heart to reflection; let the terrors of an incensed Omnipotent excite the deepest contrition.

and remorse, ere it be too late, when the archangel's trump shall sound to judgment.

“How beautiful upon the mountains”—crieth out the enraptured prophet in the sublime language of evangelical prediction—  
 “how beautiful upon the mountains are  
 “the feet of him that bringeth good tid-  
 “ings; that publisheth peace; that bring-  
 “eth good tidings of good; that publisheth  
 “salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God  
 “reigneth!” “Listen, O isles! and hearken,  
 “ye people from far!”

Behold then, salvation is now proclaimed, but woe unto them that neglect it!—  
 “Good tidings of great joy” are made known upon earth, but woe to them who shut their ears against conviction! “Unto  
 “us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the  
 “Lord,” but woe unto them that will not receive him! that scatter abroad their venomous arrows, even bitter words to profane his holy birth!—Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you

away, and there be none to deliver you.—  
*Consider*, that the last messenger of redeeming mercy is sent to call men to repentance, to virtue, and to happiness; and if they will not hear, if they will not be persuaded, punishment must be the result of their incredulity and transgression. If they *will* persist in the rejection of his doctrines, the derision of his ordinances, and the contempt of his Gospel, instead of mercy, wrath must be expected; for “ behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Let the serious contemplation of a future and a better world excite our detestation against all things that may obstruct our passage, or debar our entrance into the mansions of eternal peace. Let the thoughts of this last and ever merciful dispensation

of Almighty goodness sink deeply upon our hearts; and whilst it merits the tribute of our thankfulness, let it enforce the necessity of persevering obedience, to the attainment of everlasting bliss.—Consider, *seriously consider*, that God hath vouchsafed to disclose the clearest evidence of his will; that Christ himself came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them. Though the angel announcing his birth dispelled all gloom and despondency, saying unto the shepherds, “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings;” though the “multitude of the heavenly host” proclaimed “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men;” yet this salvation is *not of necessity*. The terms are easy; the promises are conditional; the reward is inestimable: and in proportion to our opportunities of knowing the faith, and our power of performing the covenant, should be our obedience in all things commanded by the latter; and our assent to those doctrines necessarily requisite to our establishment in the former.



The light of life now shineth in the world ; let not the blackness of infidelity, nor the darkness of sin, obscure its lustre, or destroy its influence :—" See that ye refuse " not *Christ* which speaketh." For, if the Israelites of old escaped not, because they refused Moses and the prophets that spake on *earth* ; much more shall not *we* escape, if we turn away from *him* that speaketh from *heaven*.



## SERMON X.

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### 1 TIMOTHY III. 9.

HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IN A PURE  
CONSCIENCE.

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THE Christian dispensation is represented to us in the Gospel as a covenant of grace, and truth, and peace; in which God and man are considered as parties to a solemn conditional compact and agreement. This covenant, as it arose from the purest source of goodness, and undeserved mercy, so does it declare likewise the person by whom such transcendent blessings were procured. Jesus Christ is pointed out as our Mediator, and Advocate, and Intercessor; by whose well-approved atonement the creature is reconciled to his offended Creator, and put into a capacity of obtaining everlasting life.

However mysterious the mode may appear, by which the redemption of fallen man was effected; or however inscrutable the divine wisdom which designed a sacrifice so truly wonderful and stupendous:—there can exist as little reason for the exercise of our pride in accounting for *either*, as there must ever remain the strongest considerations for our unbounded gratitude, that *both* have been marvellously performed. The covenant on God's part has been most faithfully preserved; and it remains with *us*, whether to fulfil the conditions on our side, and attain the promises; or, by a wilful violation of the contract, to forfeit our title to the proffered salvation.

The engagements in which we are so materially concerned are neither difficult to execute, nor rigorous to maintain; they consist in the belief of certain truths proposed to our faith, and in certain duties prescribed to our practice; and as our denial of the former is sinful in itself, we can have no hope of the promises by an imperfect

adherence to the latter only, when we have forfeited our pretensions in the first instance by a breach of a specific stipulation. “And  
 “this is his commandment, that we should  
 “believe on the name of his Son Jesus  
 “Christ;”—“for He whom God hath sent,  
 “speaketh the words of God; he that be-  
 “lieveth on the Son hath everlasting life;  
 “and he that believeth *not* the Son, shall  
 “not see life, but the wrath of God abideth  
 “on him.”—But as a true faith cannot subsist without good works, so neither have good works any merit but as they proceed from a lively faith; since as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also; for by works faith is made manifest. It is an indispensable obligation required of us by our Christian covenant to build upon the *one* as a foundation stone, to complete the superstructure of which the *former* is to contribute its proportion of strength. For according to our faith will be our works; as we believe *truly*, so shall we obey *sincerely*. As we regard the truth of the first proposition that Jesus

is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners; we shall easily admit the consequent obligation which constrains us to embrace every article of his religion, whether it has respect to our faith, or our practice.

The Gospel dispensation, however comprehensive in what has relation to moral duties and obligations, has a more especial view to that initiating article of our faith, without the sincere profession of which we cannot become the disciples of Christ, or heirs of the promises. The Gospel sets forth the titles, the qualifications, the nature and office of our Mediator and Redeemer; it teaches us to believe on the name of Jesus Christ; to acknowledge his divinity, and confess him the incarnate Son of God; that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, for he and the Father are one: and “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness,” comprised in the sublime doctrine of our redemption; confessedly great is the mystery, “God was manifested

“ in the flesh.”—He who was the Son of God came in the flesh, and took upon himself the likeness of man; was justified by the spirit; seen of angels; preached to the Gentiles; believed on in the world; received up into glory; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation; in that day shall they “ that obey *not* the *Gospel* of “ our Lord Jesus Christ, be punished with “ everlasting destruction from the presence “ of the Lord, and from the glory of his “ power.”

In the contemplation of such a wonderful display of Almighty wisdom and goodness, the Apostle St. Paul has selected an expression every way adapted to the surprising event which had taken place. He calls the manifestation of God in the flesh; the incarnation of our blessed Redeemer, both God and man, what it must ever remain to us, a MYSTERY: such as surpasses the utmost extent of human intellect to explain, though its truth can never be over-



turned by the powerful combination of human artifice, or cavilling ingenuity.

The powers of criticism have been employed in the investigation of some literal error which had rendered this passage a subject of controversy ; but the truth of the position, as referring in its proper sense to Christ\*, is established upon the firmest basis of concurring testimony. Nor are we destitute of commentators whose extensiveness of erudition, and acuteness of mental discernment, have evinced the necessity of comparing Scripture with Scripture; not as a mode of developing what must still be inscrutable, but to induce a far more rational and useful conclusion, that Scripture cannot be, and is not, contradictory of itself:—and though human infirmity may have in a few instances copied unadvisedly, yet the doctrines of the Gospel are incontestably certain, and our uniform belief in the truths which it contains is made the condition of our salvation, though in many parts they

\* *Vide* Berriman's Dissertation, 8vo. *in locum*.



are mysterious to finite understanding. For who is he that by searching can find out God, that can find out the Almighty to perfection?—"What is commanded thee," says the son of Sirach, "think thereupon  
 "with reverence; for it is not needful for  
 "thee to see with thine eyes the things that  
 "are in secret: be not curious then in unnecessary matters, for more things are  
 "shown thee than men understand."

However the doctrines of the Scriptures may be perverted by the casuist, or particular passages distorted by the niceties of sophistry, their truths can never be invalidated, nor our obligation to believe them overthrown. Divine in its original, the Gospel has hitherto been protected against the cavils of its opposers, and withstood the united efforts of principalities, and the powers of darkness; and "it is easier for  
 "heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle  
 "of the law" (*of Christ*) "to fail." To the wicked only is the Gospel a subject of animadversion, "for fools make a mock at

“sin;” but to the true believer it is the source of joy, and comfort, and satisfaction. “We preach Christ crucified (says the Apostle), unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called both Jews and Greeks,” who believe in the doctrines of redemption, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”—Though the mode which has been adopted for the salvation of fallen man may be deemed foolishness, yet is it the strongest attestation of divine wisdom, and goodness, and mercy, and power; and other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” God blessed for evermore.”

Let the infidel, if he will *not* be persuaded, still go on in his disbelief; for “though one should rise from the dead,” yet will he not be converted. Let the vain disputer of words still perplex himself in erroneous disquisition, and in the labyrinth of human pride; but let the sincere disciple of Christianity rely with confidence upon *him* who

is the Author of truth, and TRUTH itself; let him embrace with humility those doctrines which, though they are revealed as objects of his faith only, not of his understanding, are, inasmuch as they form a part of his contract or covenant, no less essential to the working out his salvation; than the practice of those moral obligations required of him by the Gospel are conducive to his present welfare and prosperity.

The forbidden fruit which was denied to our first parents, with an especial command that they should *not* eat of it, was held forth as a test of their allegiance to the supreme Creator of the universe. Upon their observance of this particular injunction, they were promised a continuance in the state of happiness they enjoyed; and upon their non-observance, they were to expect the fulfilment of that denunciation which was threatened as the consequence of delinquency.

This individual test of obedience to the

will of God was to our progenitors what any doctrine enjoined as a touchstone of *our* faith, is to us. For though as a single proposition it was explicit, and as an authoritative command of their Maker it ought not to have been objected to; yet there might have appeared some degree of awful obscurity in the cause which gave rise to it, and the penalty annexed to its violation. They might not have understood the necessity of such a trial of their submission and allegiance; nor was it deemed requisite that they should fully comprehend the wise purposes of their Creator in adopting such a particular mode of determining their faith and obedience. Yet, as the law itself was from God, and evinced neither rigour in the proposing of it, nor difficulty in its observance, it was their duty to have complied with the terms, and to have abstained from transgression. But too fatal experience evidenced their folly in wishing to be wise beyond what was *permitted*; nor can we expect to avoid punishment for our unbelief, if we refuse the words of unerring wisdom

and truth, and presumptuously seek to be wise also beyond what is *written*. Injustice and cruelty can never be imputed to the divine Fountain of all goodness, for a command enjoined as a trial of our progenitors' virtue, and dependance upon their Maker; and the proof of their gratitude for the innumerable blessings they received at his hands; because it should seem to involve some degree of obscurity in the peculiarity of the command. And if such was the inscrutable purpose of God in exacting of *them* some certain condition to be fully complied with, the exact nature of which they could not comprehend, though they knew that the performance of it was essential to their happiness; *we* can by no means object with any plausibility of reasoning against the further dispensations of his economy, which have rendered certain doctrines of faith, (however incomprehensible,) the criterion of *our* submission, and obedience to his authority. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and though we believe not, yet *he* abideth faithful, *he* can-



not deny himself. And since it is the commandment of God, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, in whom alone is redemption, and forgiveness, and acceptance; through whose merits and intercession only we have respect unto the recompense of reward, being fully persuaded that what God hath promised he is able also to perform: so is it our blessed Saviour's express injunction to his followers, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and he moreover declares, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

The consideration of infinite wisdom contrasted with the weakness of finite intellect, cannot but exalt our thoughts towards the Fountain of inaccessible truth; and as we feel the inability of our natural powers to fathom the purposes of the eternal will, we must acknowledge the incapacity of the human understanding, to explore the in-



scrutable ways of God's providence, and the operations of his grace. But though we may be lost in the contemplation of such ineffable glory, and unable to attain the knowledge of the Most High ; yet the exercise of our faculties is by no means confined to the investigation of moral duties *only*, as a divided part of our Christian covenant ; since various articles are enjoined as objects of our faith equally necessary to our salvation, and without the belief of which our works can be of none effect.— For all Scripture is given us by inspiration of God, and is profitable for DOCTRINE, to teach us what we are to believe ; for reproof or conviction of error ; for correction or reformation of life ; and for instruction in righteousness. As by the Scriptures we are made wise unto salvation through FAITH which is in Christ Jesus, so are we to hold fast the *mystery* of our *faith* in a pure conscience, that by integrity of life our belief may be more established : for by the establishment of our belief, our obedience will become more and more perfect, till we re-

ceive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Nor can it be objected to by any rational argumentation, that because some doctrines of the Scriptures exceed our comprehension, they are therefore undeserving our belief; since the divine veracity by which their truth is affirmed, makes it evident that such mysteries *do* exist; and the authority by which we are commanded to believe them renders our rejection of them inexcusable, and our infidelity punishable. For though the doctrine of redemption is far above human intelligence, yet the incomprehensibility of the manner by which it was performed can by no means invalidate the certainty of its having been effected; and as we expect the *benefits* arising from redemption, so are we to hold fast the profession of our *faith* without wavering; and to believe according to the Gospel and preaching of Jesus Christ; according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest; and by the Scriptures of the prophets according to

the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the *obedience of faith*.

The mystery of our faith as expressed by the Apostle, however it may involve obscurity so far as to exceed the powers of language to express, or the utmost extent of our faculties to elucidate with perspicuity, does nevertheless comprehend such essential doctrines as are for wise purposes withheld from our understanding, though submitted to our belief, as the criterion of our Christian profession.—The dispensation of the Gospel, as a covenant of grace, and mercy, and truth, requires both our assent to its doctrines, and our obedience to its laws;—it contains the design of God in the recovery of man from a state of sin and death, to a state of life and eternal happiness;—it contains the conditions (for the covenant is conditional only) by the performance of which we may expect the promises annexed;—it comprises whatever of information was deemed necessary to

our salvation; and all that humility could wish, or reasonableness hope for, as relating to the beginning, the securing, and the accomplishing of our redemption.

Though the articles of our faith may well be called mysterious, yet are they not so from entire obscurity, but as they include or imply some certain points of mysterious import which we do not fully comprehend. Yet this can never be adduced as a sufficient palliation of infidelity, when we consider that as far as they are revealed so far only can we be supposed to know them, and our belief expected; for as a want of explanation of any test proposed as the means of deciding obedience can never do away the validity of the test itself, or justify the breach of it in the person to whom it is submitted; so a deficiency in *clearness* in the interpretation of any doctrine requiring our unfeigned assent as a proof of our *faith*, cannot weaken our obligation in believing the doctrine, though the interpretation is withheld: since the

explanation in neither case forms any part of the test proposed, which must ever remain the same, for the purposes to which it was originally intended.

Either doctrines then above our comprehension may be true, or else we must prove that the human intellect is the measure of truth, and the proper standard by which any proposition may be determined.—But from common observation we perceive our inability to account for the operations of nature otherwise than by referring them to the Author of the Creation; so that we may infer, that human intellect can never be deemed the measure by which truth is to be explained: and if such operations are not less certain because we are ignorant of the mode by which they are effected, we must, upon the same principle, allow that the doctrines of Scripture revelation, however much surpassing our faculties to comprehend, may not only be certain also, but should be unquestionably believed upon the paramount evidence of Divine Authority.



For with the same degree of obstinacy might the philosopher doubt the reality of motion, because he cannot perceive the impelling force; as well might he disbelieve his own existence, because he cannot decide clearly by what means he exists :— or as well may we deny the effect, when we are ignorant of the cause, as dispute those well-attested truths which are revealed to us in the Gospel as the trials of our faith, because human reason is perfectly inadequate to develop the purposes of Divine wisdom.

That Christ, the author of our salvation and finisher of our faith, was truly and properly both God and man, is the strong and undeniable doctrine of the sacred writings; and whatever difficulty may attend our conception of the manner of his co-existence, the evidence of the fact attested in the Gospel is no more weakened by our ignorance of the mode, than the impossibility of explaining infinity, omniscience, prescience, and omnipresence, can any way



invalidate those arguments which prove the being of a God.

“ Behold,” says St. Paul, “ I show you a  
 “ *mystery*;—we shall not all sleep, but we  
 “ shall all be changed, in a moment, in the  
 “ twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;  
 “ for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead  
 “ shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall  
 “ be changed: for this corruptible must  
 “ put on incorruption, and this mortal must  
 “ put on immortality.”—Here is a doctrine  
 advanced with all the dignity of full assurance, evidenced by the certainty of Christ’s own resurrection. Nor can the extent of human understanding explain how this change differs from death itself; nor can the vain disputer of the world show wherein the difference consists. And though we cannot descry the nature, the beauty, and the glories of a future state, it is no less certain that death shall lose its sting, and the grave its victory; as we have in this life borne the image of the earthy, so shall we in the next bear the image of the

heavenly; for “as in Adam all die, even  
 “so in Christ shall all be made alive.”  
 However incomprehensible then any doctrine may be, it is not to be rejected upon the plea of its incomprehensibility;—it is to be received with humility as the word of truth; revered with piety, from the awfulness of its sanction: and whilst we hold fast the mystery of our faith in a pure conscience, so should we perform the obligations of our Christian covenant with steadfastness, with diligence, with perseverance, and becoming gratitude.

So prevailing however is pride (the offence of our first parents) over the dispassionate reasoning of mankind, that although we have an unerring guide to direct our faith, and to lead us into the way of happiness; yet are we ever seeking impossibilities at the expense of a known duty.—As well might we engage to measure the earth with a span, or to take up the sea in the hollow of our palms;—as easy might we deem it to count the sand on the sea shore; to tell

the number of the stars, and call them all by their names, as to fathom the unsearchable purposes of the Almighty, who in wisdom hath founded the earth, and by understanding hath established the heavens. Infidelity, hardened by profaneness and irreligion, seeks refuge in the dismal coverture of materialism;—the casuist, perplexed in intricacy and doubt, submits his faith to the deductions of human pride; whilst the disciples of modern refinement unjustly infer contradiction from their inability to reconcile mysteries by the weakness of their philosophy: in the one instance wretchedness is preferred to comfort; and in the other, arrogance gets the ascendancy over humility.—But “we have not so learned Christ.” In reliance upon the promises, and in the belief of the faith, we look forward with hope of eternal bliss; and though we know only in part, we patiently await that happy period, when “we shall know, even as we are known.”—As the Gospel contains nothing but what is true, nothing but what is just; nothing but what is worthy

of God to declare, and man to receive, and every thing therein is most amply confirmed; so from hence we have the strongest persuasion, and the firmest basis of all our belief, and all our hopes. By the concurring evidence of prophecy, of miracles, and universal goodness, we are assured beyond all contradiction or doubt, that the Scriptures are of Divine origin; and as the doctrines they contain are revealed by Christ himself, so should they be received as the rule of our faith, and the conditional test of our unequivocal obedience.

But since some mysteries in our holy religion, which are unintelligible to us, and which we shall never be able to understand unless some new and more adequate faculties of conception are bestowed upon us, do nevertheless demand the exercise of our undissembled belief;—and since many other doctrines more fully revealed, and better understood, do with them form one regular system of religious duty, upon

which our future salvation depends:—so are we most seriously concerned in the observance of every point, to keep the whole covenant of Christianity; and to hold the mystery of our faith in a pure conscience; undefiled—uninterrupted—irreproachable—and without wavering.

Be not moved away therefore from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard; but be ye followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.—And as faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; consider likewise that the word preached will not profit, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;” “for not the hearers of the Gospel are just before God,” but they only who perform the whole contract, both by keeping the mystery of their faith, and discharging the moral obligations of their profession, “shall be justified.”





## SERMON XI.

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ROMANS xii. 9.

ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH  
IS GOOD.

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CHRISTIANITY, properly considered as a system of religious duty and performance, may be comprehended under the simple denominations of faith and practice; each mutually dependent upon the other, and so beautifully blended together, that the latter without the concurring assistance of the former cannot efficaciously subsist: nor can the perfection of the system obtain without the harmonized union of both.—Whatever is advanced in the Scriptures as necessary to our belief, or enjoined as obligatory of our practice, is so awfully sanctioned by Divine revelation, and so autho-

ritatively urged by Divine command ; that ignorance cannot palliate infidelity, nor can misinterpretation extenuate disobedience. The subject is important, serious, and profitable ; it is a combination of wisdom, and of goodness, and of truth ; containing all that regards our present welfare, or can possibly conduce to our future happiness. Though “ the mystery of faith ” may in some instances baffle the imbecility of finite understanding to explain ; yet, as it is revealed by infinite knowledge, it cannot imply a contradiction, but claims our unfeigned assent by the strongest ties of allegiance, which we owe to the Supreme Author of eternal veracity. Nor are the precepts of our religion (though in some cases they have been subject to the animadversions of rash judgment) so difficult to practice as the opposers of the system represent them. They are holy, they are just, they are equitable ; they are founded on the basis of universal charity, and delineated in terms the most easy, the most plain, the most familiar : and as we value

our comfort in this world, or hope for reward in the next, we are exhorted, in the concise language of St. Paul, to perform all those duties which Christianity inculcates; “to abhor that which is evil; to  
 “cleave to that which is good; to be kindly  
 “affectioned one to another with brotherly  
 “love:” that by so doing we may “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy,  
 “acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.”

The advice of the apostle may be properly divided into two separate branches of Christian obligation, distinguished according to their different objects. The negative injunction “abhor that which is evil,” has reference to the temptations we occasionally meet with, inciting us to *wrong*; whilst the affirmative command “cleave to  
 “that which is good,” urges us to the performance of positive *right*: and from thence we may infer the necessity of circumspection, as a deducible consequence to which we are exhorted by every motive of duty, and to the observance of which

we are most strongly incited by the consideration of personal safety. Judging of the advice then in its general construction, we may receive it as a summary of prudential caution; as comprising in its import one regular principle of sedulous attention to our conduct in every thing which may relate to the trial of our virtue: whether by avoiding with carefulness whatever may tend to its obstruction and endanger it; or by seeking with avidity whatever may contribute to its perfection and establishment.

Subject to frailty, and prone to mistake, we do not unfrequently err without any formal or positive design. Negligent, careless, and inattentive to the duties of religion, we do not sufficiently avail ourselves of its strong holds, but too heedlessly surrender ourselves captives to wickedness, without courage to withstand the assault.—To overcome difficulties, however, little more is wanting than inclination and perseverance; whilst negligence and supineness will insensibly lead us on to the worst

of excesses. Though the mind may at first be startled at an enormity of guilt, yet as sin is always progressive, we may at last be imperceptibly hurried on to the perpetration of the worst of crimes, by incautiously giving way to the insidious overtures of temptation. To overcome the solicitations of corrupted nature; to fortify our minds against the seductions of evil; to strengthen our weakness, and improve our strength, much assistance is granted; much prudence is necessary; much diligence is required. And, lest danger should come upon us by surprise, circumspection becomes an exercise of no trifling importance.

What relates to the positive violation of the law, or the wilful transgression of any known commandment of God is clearly pointed out and intelligible to every capacity; and in consideration of those penalties annexed to the disobedience of them, the apostle enjoins us in the first precept which he gives “abhor that which is evil:” for

though the Gospel is “ the power of God  
 “ unto salvation to every one that believeth ;”  
 yet “ therein is revealed also the wrath of  
 “ God from heaven, against all ungodliness  
 “ and unrighteousness of men.” Here cir-  
 cumsppection may be regarded a primary  
 virtue, as having relation to all our imper-  
 fections, and to all our weaknesses ; to the  
 temptations which surround us, the plea-  
 sures which allure, and in general to what-  
 ever has a tendency to lead us into actual  
 sin. For the day cometh, speak the pro-  
 phets in the alarming voice of admonitory  
 warning, “ the day of the Lord cometh  
 “ with wrath, and fierce anger ; and he  
 “ will punish the world for their evil, and  
 “ the wicked for their iniquity. He will  
 “ cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease,  
 “ and will lay low the haughtiness of the  
 “ terrible ; neither shall any strengthen  
 “ himself in the iniquity of his life.”

Though the nature of happiness and the  
 means of attaining it ; though the beatitudes  
 promised to holiness, and the denunciations



which are threatened to transgression are so emphatically pronounced; yet are we too frequently mistaken both as to our notions and pursuits of the *former*; and too careless and incautious as to the event of the *latter*. Sensible as we must be, that unrestrained thought is strongly inclined to many evil propensities; convinced as we are by experience, that powerful incentives assail us on all sides; that we are stimulated to obliquity of conduct, and flattered by the delusions of momentary enjoyment; we have too great an indifference to the practice of religion, and too great an attachment to the fanciful externals of temporal aggrandizement. By the prevalence of fashionable gaieties, and the influence of example, we become solicitous about gratifications, the reverse of which we should be professedly in search of; and by proceeding upon wrong grounds, we industriously, though imperceptibly, become instrumental to our own unhappiness and misfortune. Impelled as we are by the force of passion, the dictates of undisguised truth are too

strongly counteracted by the delusions of error, and evil predominates over virtuous actions. The seeming lawfulness of what we desire is hastily reconciled to the mind, for want of that discernment which would descry the deformity of vice under the semblance of innocence, and teach us, as we regard the distinction between finite and infinite; imperfection and perfection; time and eternity; to “abhor that which is evil; and cleave to that which is good:” for “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life,” to as many as obey his commands.

Should mature deliberation fully adjudge the lawfulness of what we are in search of, and religion admit the conclusions of our judgment, yet may the object itself become criminal and pernicious through our *abuse* of it. Here, our caution should be in proportion to the violence of our affection; for since it is the dignity of the object alone which can justify our desire of it, or make it worthy our acquisition; whatever may

excite our inclinations to the attainment of what is unworthily estimated, or lead to the abuse of what is lawfully conceded, will, unless carefully guarded against, strengthen and inflame those very irregularities which Christianity commands us to counteract, and overcome. Nor is it less prudent to beware of those errors which have at any time occasioned the ruin of others, than of those peculiar propensities to which we find ourselves more especially liable. For, as the pilot who knows the rock upon which a fellow-navigator has been cast away, will endeavour to escape it, lest *he* likewise should be shipwrecked; so we also should be cautious in steering our course through the dangerous ocean of life, and profit by observation; that, by shunning those temptations which surround us, we may avoid the shoals of seductive vices, which have fatally destroyed the virtue and happiness of our brethren.

Was it indeed possible for us to pass gently down the stream of life in one per-

petual calm ; and with ease and indolence to glide gently into the harbour of eternal rest ; where would exist the trial of our respective virtues ?—Where would be the honour which is attached to the resistance of vice ?—By what means could our submission to God's dispensations be ascertained ; or by what test could our allegiance to his authority be made known ?—Such listless indetermination would destroy the satisfaction arising from well-exercised zeal ; and the soul would be deprived of its highest gratifications, by such careless insensibility, and exemption from employment. Such a state of unmeaning indolence is incompatible with the notion of trial, and inconsistent with the name of reward ; the wisdom of the Almighty hath not ordained it. Storms and tempests obstruct our passage : the piercing wind of adversity annoys the extended canvass of our expectations ; the waves of fluctuating desire dash vehemently against the fragile bark of humanity, and threaten it with destruction ; whilst personal security requires every effort of our strength

to combat the violence of opposing temptations, before we can arrive at the harbour of eternal peace. As our present welfare is concerned alone in present action, and future punishment or reward will be the effect of our well or evil doing, no precaution can be neglected with safety ; no vigilance omitted without danger, and without guilt ; and, as we hope for tranquillity in this life, or anticipate the promises of happiness in the next, self-interest will urge us to the necessity of adopting those means which Christianity points out, as the only mode by which either can be obtained. Though Christ hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God ; though he hath, by his own resurrection, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel ; yet if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth ; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment : and “ it is a fearful thing to fall “ into the hands of the living God.”



The exhortation of St. Paul, considered in its most extensive view, has a regard to every variety of duty incumbent upon us both as Christians, and as men. As comprising the system of the faith in the abstract, it incites us in general terms to avoid the deviations of sin, and attend to the innocence of our lives; to “abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good.” If construed in its largest application, as diverging into channels of multifarious connexion, it leads to a diversity of precepts branching out from their original source, equally coercive, and effective of general happiness. It impels us to the performance of those maxims of religion by which our judgment may be better informed, and our actions more usefully directed.

Though the negative injunction of the text constitutes an essential of duty deserving the most serious reflection, since the commission of evil pre-supposes a defection of doing good, (sin in itself being a breach of the law and obnoxious to the penalty



annexed;) yet the affirmative precept, as comprehending a multiplicity of domestic charities too frequently disregarded, or unperformed, may justify an enlargement upon a topic so universally interesting and important. This is my commandment, saith our blessed Saviour, that ye “love one another, as I have loved you.” And in the enumeration of Christian virtues recited by St. Paul, we are most strenuously recommended to “be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love;” to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; being of the same mind one towards another:” neither reverencing wealth with unbecoming pride, nor despising poverty with indecent contempt; but with humility, and with benevolence, to “condescend to men of low estate.”

Antecedent to revelation indeed, man, by the deductions of reason when divested of passion and prejudice, could not but perceive the distinction between moral in-

tegrity, and intemperate indulgences. The injurious consequences of the *latter*, though unattended to, were not unknown; and the beneficial effects resulting from the *former*, pronounced it more favourable to individual welfare, and collective prosperity. Nor had maxims of benevolence been omitted in the writings of the heathens, prior to the promulgation of the Gospel of Christ; a mixed compound of indefinite morality, and reciprocal duties, had occupied the attention of schoolmen, philosophers, and poets.

But though reason itself, when enlightened by science, might have concluded the superiority of moral principles over vicious inclinations; and, arguing from the consequent effects produced by virtuous actions, might have admitted the good tendency of mutual obligations and reciprocal kindnesses; yet reason alone was incompetent to the enforcement of its own laws. Deficient of an adequate rule, the theories of philosophy wanted an impelling power, so

that the affections of the mind too frequently deviated from the line of rectitude, through the insufficiency of those laws which the indefinite suggestions of reason had prescribed,

When the infatuation and blindness of mankind had broken down the barriers of virtue, and the dictates of reason became weak and ineffectual; when the mind was overwhelmed in the tumult of contending passions, and her faculties were impaired by the prevalence of corruption; it pleased the Almighty in his goodness authoritatively to interpose, and, by successive dispensations instrumental to the correction of vice, to declare his approbation of what was virtuous and beneficial; thus inciting them “to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly before God.” Nor was his goodness limited to such dispensations alone; but in the fulness of time, the blessed author of salvation, Jesus Christ himself, to whom were made known the ways of life, condescended to come upon earth, and teach

men what they should do that they might work the works of God ; and expounded to them the will of God more perfectly. Revelation, therefore, as comprehending a code of the most consummate wisdom, purity, and excellence, recommended with the most endearing terms expressive of disinterested affection and regard, and promulged as an universal system obligatory upon all nations ; sanctions the performance of those duties it enjoins, by assurance of promises held forth as a reward of obedience ; and a certainty of future punishment which it denounces against those who wilfully transgress its laws. And as the Gospel of Christ is given as an uniform rule of action by which we are commanded to “ give all diligence, adding to our faith, “ virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and “ to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity ; ” it evinces a superiority of claim to our acceptance, from the authority of its Divine

origin ; whilst the maxims of reason alone, are imperfect and without sanction ; deriving all the honour they deserve from the contaminated source of human imbecility and corruption.

Should it be urged, that the Gospel which is called “ the power of God unto salvation,” is weak, in that it hath not fully prevailed to the prevention of those enormities which abound ; and some reasonable expectation might have been entertained from its origin being Divine, that there would have existed an efficient influence in its doctrines, more than equal to the counteracting opposition of natural corruption ; the proposition may be retorted, and a contrary argument proved. For although it is thus denominated powerful, yet is it thus predicated of “ every one “ that *believeth* ;” of those only who, being enlightened and instructed “ in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, and “ approving what is acceptable to the Lord, “ have no fellowship with the unfruitful “ works of darkness, but rather reprove

“them.”—The nature of that belief being considered according to the definition of the apostle, “faith which worketh by love,” exciting us to the performance of our duty towards God and towards man, since “by works faith is made perfect;” we may fairly admit the inference, that where sincere belief operates freely to its proper end, corresponding good practice obtains: and in proportion as it is weakened or established, (whatever may be the cause of either,) our virtue is also endangered, or rendered more strong.—The prevalence of those crimes, therefore, which are occasionally observable, by no means implies the weakness or insufficiency of Christianity to correct them; but rather we may affirm, that, without the power of such a system, much greater depravity would have ensued: and was our practice uniform with our profession, many further offences would be obviated, and the power of the Gospel would be evidenced in the consistency of good actions, proceeding from a sound belief.



It was a question proposed by St. James, “What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?” “Can faith,” which without works is empty, “save him?” “If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye gave them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”—The answer is obvious, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” And the example is not less satisfactory and convincing, “Abraham believed God;” and by obedience testified that faith which “was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.” The conclusion therefore is, if “by works,” proceeding from faith, “a man is justified, and not from faith only,” the injunction of St. Paul, in the text, becomes more emphatically urgent upon us, both as a lesson of caution, and a command of indispensable duty; the former instructing us to “abhor

“ that which is evil,” as the first principle of religious duty ; and the latter inciting us to “ cleave to that which is good,” as the sure testimony that our allegiance to the divine will is the legitimate offspring of true faith.

Nor should any trifling objection be adduced against a system so well attested, and so strongly authenticated, because its partial effect is not equal to its general tendency in correcting vice. For it may be observed, that however binding the laws, or however authoritative the precepts of the Gospel may be in themselves, the sanctions of its penalties and rewards have not respect to immediate administration ; but in their remote consequences have an especial regard to a final, certain period of retribution, and distributive justice. And, should we argue from what hath taken place formerly, *without* the Gospel, to what obtains at present under the due operation of its *influence* ; from the condition of barbarous ignorance, to a state of improved knowledge ; and from

the days of Pagan darkness to the more happy period of Christian light ; it may be deemed more wise and prudent to further the end of such a dispensation by conformity to those rules which it prescribes, than to object to its utility, because the vices of mankind are not eradicated or overcome.

Christianity can never be considered as a compulsory system, by which men are urged to the performance of any specified duties, without a capacity of election ; since virtue is despoiled of its real value, and becomes a term of vague import, when it proceeds not from a liberty of determination. The freedom of choice constituting alone the merit of a good action, and bespeaking the malignity of a bad one, a command would be nugatory without a possibility of transgression ; and as without a power of doing evil, there could exist no power of doing well, it is erroneous to suppose any necessitating impulse, inconsistent with the genuine design of the Gospel.— Certain terms are proposed for our accept-

ance, or our refusal; a steady adherence to the laws, no less than a full conviction of the truths which this covenant proposes, are made indispensable requisites, by which it can be rendered instrumental to our temporal happiness, or effective of our eternal salvation. Though every degree of benefit which might have been anticipated from the promulgation of the Gospel has not hitherto been experienced; yet a peculiar alteration in the manners, the opinions, and conduct of mankind has ensued from it. Civilization, and an enlarged spirit of benevolence, may be discerned, wherever it has been made known and acknowledged; “so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.”

It is true, indeed, that human obstinacy may obstruct the admission of divine truth, and human depravity may counteract the influence of religious belief, so that the reverse of St. Paul’s injunction occasionally takes place; and men not unfrequently omit that which is proved to be good, and

cleave to that which is acknowledged to be evil. But such a corruption of principle no more affects the validity of the Gospel precepts, as the standard for our conduct, than the cause of wilful infidelity can justly be imputed to a deficiency of evidence, to confirm the doctrines which Christianity reveals. Infidelity, as proceeding from a bad heart, is unwilling to regard those denunciations which must alarm, from a certainty of condemnation; and a continuance in sin, where belief obtains, may be referred to those evil propensities which we heedlessly permit to gain the ascendancy over our better understanding; so that, where evil abounds, it arises solely from the perversion of the will, which is too forcibly acted upon by those very passions, which religion teaches us to subdue. Nor is it a task of trifling difficulty, even where the judgment admits the impropriety of such contradictions, to induce men to an uniform compliance with its proper decision. As the mind feels an indisposition or negligence in performing the essentials of virtue, it in-

sensibly gives way to temptations without resistance; and, through the imperceptible impulse of general inadvertency, becomes careless of the result. And since it is a self-evident maxim, that there are more ways of getting wrong, than keeping right\*; there are two vicious extremes to one virtuous mean, so that we may glide into vice without effort, whilst we cannot recover ourselves without the greatest exertion; circumspection cannot be deemed useless. It will teach us the necessity of cleaving to good, as a prevention of evil; and to consider it easier to oppose the first approach of guilt, by avoiding the deceitfulness of the snare, than having once been entangled in vice, to rescue ourselves from it.

Should the Gospel be admitted as the efficient standard of our faith and practice, by which our belief is to be established, and our conduct to be regulated and directed; should the doctrines of Christianity be confirmed by the power of truth, and

\* Hay's Theological Lectures.



its precepts be justified by their aptness to promote the accomplishment of the end designed; let not the inattention of men be such, that acknowledging what is right, they perversely commit what is wrong.— Let not delinquency arise from inactivity in resisting the solicitations of evil, nor transgression proceed from a deficiency of virtue in performing what is good. Should we desire to be happy, let us consider that happiness depends upon our *own* conduct. Certain rules are laid down in the Gospel, by which it may be attained. Christianity enjoins every motive to obedience, and offers every incitement to virtue consistent with the free agency of man; and his welfare is inseparably connected with the regular discharge of his duty. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,” are the words of an inspired Apostle; from whence we may rationally conclude, that profession, without corresponding practice, is

hypocritical and dangerous; subjecting us to condemnation, without the plea for excuse. Since where the act is contrary to the decisions of judgment; where man who knoweth what is good and neglects that good; or being persuaded of evil, and yet committeth evil, he “is subverted and sin-  
 “eth, being condemned of himself.” And as the irregularity of his passions overcomes the power of conviction, his transgression is likewise aggravated by the perversion of his will, and his punishment must be proportionably greater. Consider then, that eternal happiness depends on present action; and as your actions proceed from an earnest desire of pleasing God, and assisting your fellow-creatures;—as you “abhor  
 “that which is evil,” because it is a decisive command against actual sin; and “cleave  
 “to that which is good,” as an equally strong injunction, urging you to positive holiness:—As you are “kindly affectioned  
 “one to another with brotherly love,” as the certain test that ye are Christ’s disciples; and “provide things honest in the sight of

“all men,” as the distinguishing characteristic, that your profession is well-grounded in the heart: your vigilance and circumspection will meet the sure recompense of reward. Your diligence in avoiding *evil*, will strengthen and advance your virtue *here*; and your unremitted perseverance in *doing good*, shall entitle you to everlasting happiness *hereafter*.



## SERMON XII.

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### ROMANS XII. 9, 10.

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ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD: BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE.

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THE great system of Christianity, in its primary intention, was to improve the corruption of human nature; to call men from the deplorable darkness of paganism, to the marvellous light of the Gospel: and, by removing the imperfections of the Mosaic law, to advance us to a superior state of excellence, by the perfection of a better covenant. It reveals the promises annexed to obedience, and announces the certainty of punishment connected with transgression. In its tendency to promote the most desirable end for which it was promulged, it teaches us to regulate the unwarrantable ebullitions of desire, and to correct those

propensities by which we are led into sin ; and whilst we are exhorted to “ abhor that “ which is evil,” we are also persuaded to “ cleave to that which is good.”

In the most interesting and important duties of religion, no less than in the common concerns of life, there must be some previous commencement before any progress can be supposed ; the understanding must be informed of what is necessary to be executed, as the first step towards future and more enlarged improvement ; for, unless the constituent principles are made known, it is a futile expectation to anticipate an advance, when ignorance is the obstacle of prevention.—The belief of God’s existence therefore ; and from the certainty of his existence, the belief likewise of his attributes, should be the basis upon which the superstructure of obedience is to be raised ; since from thence, as from an original source, proceeds every diverging branch of our duty, both towards our Creator, and our fellow-creature.



The difficulty of attaining that saving knowledge by which our present or future happiness is to be ensured, however insurmountable it may appear to unassisted reason, is by no means impracticable, when the mind is called into action, and enlightened. And, since efficient means are afforded us, by which such attainment may readily be acquired ; it becomes an indispensable requisite of our duty, to seek after that righteousness, by which alone our happiness can be effected.

As the Scriptures were imparted, no less as a rule for our conduct, than as a system of faith ; which testify of good, and what the Lord doth require of us ; they urge our performance of those conditions upon which our salvation depends, by every motive of affectionate promise and authoritative command. Whatever is therein revealed as an object of belief, should be fully credited upon the veracity of the Divine inspirer of them ; and whatever is demanded as needful for our practice, should be uniformly

complied with, as his especial injunction. If satisfaction in this world, or reward in the next, can merit our attention, or claim one serious thought of the heart; if that calm serenity of the soul, that sweet complacency of inward peace, which faith and virtue can alone procure, have any charm to entice us to our duty: religion will become the sweet solace of our momentary afflictions; Christianity our sincere profession; and the assurances of the Gospel, our hope, and permanent consolation.

The mild precepts of Christianity, as they abound in all that is amiable, all that is endearing, allure us to the practice of all that is lovely and of good report. They encourage us by all the eloquence of gentle persuasion and superior wisdom, to seek after those things which ensure our peace, and advance us to a state of eternal bliss.—And since benevolence the most extensive, and compassion the most tender, formed the heavenly trait of our Saviour's character, who came into the world not only to recon-

cile God to man, but men to each other; leaving the pattern of inestimable goodness, and teaching his disciples to “ follow his “ steps :” we find the correspondent exhortations of St. Paul no less directed to this principle of universal charity than to the most distressing duty of his office, in announcing the punishment which is threatened to actual wickedness. In the emphatic language of authority, he commands us to “ abhor that which is evil ;” and, with an equal degree of firmness, he enjoins us to “ cleave to that which is good ;” and as a means of effecting that good, we are excited by all the tenderness of Christianity, to “ be kindly affectioned one to another,” distributing to the necessity of those who are in a “ low estate.”

However much the negative command of the Apostle may deserve our regard, as involving in its consequences the fatal conclusion of actual sin ; yet the affirmative injunction claims an equal share of attention, when we contemplate the final sen-

tence which will be adjudged to the breach of a known obligation. But as it is impossible to adhere or *cleave* to that object, about which we are unsolicitous or undetermined; since adherence implies some previous choice and determination; neutrality or inaction cannot be deemed otherwise than transgression, and becomes proportionably criminal as the object demanding our choice is more clearly ascertained by revelation, and disregarded with indifference.—For as virtue consists in action, and without activity the moral principle is nominal only, or insignificant, it must require some degree of vigilance in embracing the opportunities which occasionally present themselves for the exercise of it.—And it is an argument of no inferior consideration urged by St. Paul, as an encouragement to such a disposition among his Hebrew converts; that whatsoever their Christian profession might have demanded of them in other respects, yet, “to do good” and to communicate,” they were to “forget not.” To act virtuously in their

general intercourse with each other, and to impart some portion of those things they possessed, was no less obligatory and binding, than the special forbiddance of evil; “for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

It is unfortunate for mankind that the latter injunction of the Apostle does not in its unlimited extent more generally obtain; since universal benevolence is no less appointed a duty essential to Christianity, than the abhorring of that which is evil is enforced by the awfulness of severe denunciation. But indifference and carelessness too frequently operate as chief obstacles to the practical performance of what is right; and, whilst circumspection is considered as an immaterial virtue, or too little observed, an opportunity of *doing good* is not uncommonly omitted by many, who are scrupulously alarmed at the commission of actual *evil*.

Here is an error of no inconsiderable



magnitude; meriting our reflection, and deserving reformation. If absolute acts of sin are strongly forbidden by the condemnatory clauses of the Divine law, we shall find that acts of omission are no less imported as a transgression against a positive rule, enjoined by the same authority, and for which we are amenable likewise to future punishment,—“ Cease to do evil, learn “ to do well,” is the forcible appeal of an inspired prophet, who particularizes some peculiar acts which were deemed indispensable to that obedience which the law required: “ Seek judgment, (says Isaiah) relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; “ plead for the widow;”—“ if ye be willing “ and obedient ye shall eat the good of the “ land; but if ye refuse and rebel ye shall be “ devoured with the sword; for the mouth “ of the Lord hath spoken it.”—Nor does the Gospel of Christ acquit any one of guilt, or hold forth the hopes of reward to any who neglect the practice of such moral obligations, which it prescribes as absolutely necessary to the attainment of the promises.



“Not every one that calls me Lord, Lord,  
 “shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;  
 “but he that doeth the will of my Father  
 “which is in heaven.”—These are the express conditions of our blessed Saviour; so that without *actual* performance of that will, which he has made known, we can by no means establish our title to future happiness. Negative virtue will avail us nothing; it is partial; it is nugatory; it is inefficient. Though the servant returned unto his lord the talent with which he was entrusted, without injury and without waste, yet was he condemned: he might have improved that talent by industry, which he slothfully concealed until his lord’s return.

Should we consider this present world, as it is every where represented in Scripture, a state of probation or pilgrimage to another, in which we have not only much sin to avoid, but many virtues to exercise also; and that the commission of the latter is no more reprehended in the Gospel, than the omission of the former; self-interest should

dictate the necessity of caution, lest we suffer the penalty annexed to the transgression of either; so that whilst we “abhor that which is evil,” we may steadfastly “cleave to that which is good.”

Although actual sin is odious to God, as a primary breach of his positive law to the contrary; yet the presumption is no less dangerous than false, which inconsiderately argues, that a deficiency in respect to its collateral duties attaches a delinquency of a venial description only. The rich man in the Gospel does not appear to have suffered in consequence of temporal prosperity, which was adventitious, and by no means criminal; because the casual circumstance of his wealthiness required the externals of grandeur, and he “fared sumptuously every day.”—His condemnation does not seem to have arisen from any imputed enormity of guilt which he had committed; since upon such charges he was not arraigned. No oppression, no tyranny, no real act of cruelty is adduced against

him : but with all the influence of authority ; with all the power which wealth could give, or dignity command ; with opportunity, as well as ability to do good ; the afflicted Lazarus lies begging at his door—unheard—unpitied—unlamented.

To adduce a much stronger argument, if such argument may be required as an incentive to your benevolence, when each individual here seems eagerly to anticipate the moment for its display ;—to adduce a more lively appeal to the understanding, as well as to the heart ; and urge a representation confirmatory of a doctrine so essential to our happiness ; the unerring page of Scripture may again be unfolded, and the conclusions of truth may be derived from the record.

The description of the last day, as portrayed by our Saviour in the inimitable language of admonitory warning, points out the foundation of equity preceding the administration of justice at that awful period.

The recital is concise, but comprehensive, and full ; it may give rise to much serious contemplation and remark. It will inspire the poor man with patience, and urge the more opulent to demean themselves with humility ; it will enforce the injunction of the text, “ be kindly affectioned one “ to another with brotherly love.” The characters brought forward in this picture of distress are painted with energy, and delineated with simplicity. The allegations of injustice, or fraud, or impiety, or actual wickedness, form no part of the accusation. No absolute crime, no positive iniquity, is adduced ; the sins of *omitted good* are alone expatiated upon, and irreversible sentence pronounced. “ Depart from me,” says the judge of righteousness and truth, “ for “ I was an hungry, and ye gave me *no* “ meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me *no* drink ; “ I was a stranger, and ye took me *not* in ; “ naked, and ye clothed me *not* ; sick and “ in prison, and ye visited me *not*.” The inference is easy, plain, equitable, and just. Though the threats of the law are assured

with penalty against the commission of real crime ; and injustice, dishonesty, inhumanity, and every species of vice, are denounced with punishment : yet are we no less strenuously commanded, as we value the reward, or hope the beatitudes of heaven, to cultivate all those amiable affections of the soul, without which our religion is hypocrisy, and our faith in vain. These things Christianity enjoins ; and unless pride overcomes our duty, or avarice destroys the keenness of sensibility, the natural feelings of the human heart will beat in unison with the precepts of Christianity.

In whatever sphere of life man is ; whatever his capacity, or whatever his station ; it is no less his duty to comply with those precepts of benevolent tendency than to avoid the perpetration of any particular act forbidden by the law of Christ :—each is equal in authority ; both are explicit. As a breach of duty towards our fellow-creatures, in withholding that good which it is in the power of our hand to do, involves in



it a breach of duty towards God also ; the exhortation of the Apostle becomes comprehensive of much necessary obligation. Though we may not find any exact sentence of Scripture specially adapted to every circumstance in which our beneficence may be useful, and by which we may effect some particular good ; yet our allegiance to the divine Author of Christianity should be evidenced by an uniform and regular obedience to his will. St. Paul declares that “ it is good to be zealously affected al-  
 “ ways in a good thing ;” and he likewise asserts as an incentive to universal and unlimited acts of benevolence, that “ if there  
 “ be first a willing mind,” the contribution of the well-disposed are “ accepted accord-  
 “ ing to that a man hath, and not accord-  
 “ ing to that he hath not.” And “ God  
 “ loveth a cheerful giver.”

But since the soul of man, superior in excellence, surpasses in value the frail materials of its earthly companion ; and the



improvement of its faculties is the chief object of temporal existence : wisdom and reflection will discover the paramount duty of administering instruction to the former, as a constituent part of benevolence ; or, as it may rather be accounted, (in proportion to the distinction between the two,) the most important species of Christian charity. To instruct the ignorant in the peaceful ways of duty, and defend the innocent from the seductive paths of guilt ; to divert the evil propensities of incautious youth, and direct them into the channel of established virtue ; to enlighten their minds, and teach them that doctrine worthy of all acceptance that “ Christ Jesus came into “ the world to save sinners ;” describes a character of illustrious goodness, deserving the highest respect from man, and ensuring the approbation of the Almighty. *These* are virtues meriting imitation, and worthy our profession ; *these* are duties incumbent upon the rich, the learned, and the noble : they are so many positive acts of charity

upon which God, from his holy habitation, looks down well pleased.

To relieve in poor children the united distress of ignorance and poverty ; to bring into action those dormant seeds of virtue, which, for the want of early culture, may be poisoned by the pestilential weeds of infidelity and vice ; to remove the misery of intellectual darkness by every proper application ; to stimulate the dull faculties of the mind by the energetic force of divine truth and wisdom, which, as by collision the spark arises from the flint, might kindle into the hallowed flame of religious devotion : to instruct the rising generation in the moral obligations to virtuous action, that, in their respective stations, they may become useful members of society, loyal subjects, and good men ; are so many sources of real benevolence, which do honour to human nature, and in their proper time and place challenge our patronage and our praise. Nor in these things should prejudice over-

power the dictates of humanity, nor the chilling blasts of apathy freeze up the fountain of compassion. When such are the duties we owe to God ; when such the obligations we owe to man ; and such the objects which implore the fostering hand of kindness to effect : let not the tear of pity plead in vain ; let not the claims of poverty pass unregarded ; nor the eternal welfare of these your adopted children be neglected, trifled with, and despised.

In the various institutions formed in these Dominions for the education of the lower classes, whether they are national or parochial only ; whether confined to local situation, or extended to general admission ; their primary object is the advancement of their spiritual, whilst the requisites for their temporal welfare are by no means omitted, or injudiciously applied. Nor can the inutility of such institutions be proved by contrary facts, though pre-conceived opinions have occasionally adduced suppositions of plausible import, originating in

misconception and error. And whilst their usefulness has long ago been ascertained and admitted, it becomes worse than futile to persevere in obstinate prejudice, from a *possible* abuse which only *might* occur from them; and thus to counteract the certain good which *has* been derived, and which, from the experience of those benefits already evinced, may *again* be more reasonably expected. For as the happiness or misery of communities depends solely on the principles and manners of the people; it becomes a duty we owe to our country, no less to excite the integrity of the rising generation, than to correct the depravity which may be visible in the present. Nor should we be inattentive to any mode of useful learning which has been devised as a means of checking the growth of that wickedness, which, if nourished in ignorance, and established by idleness, may ultimately endanger our national safety. And as disloyalty and profaneness are known to advance in proportion to the decay of piety and religion; too much attention cannot be paid to

the improvement of moral principles among the inferior orders of society ; nor can too much circumspection obtain in the conduct and example of those to whom power and superiority are annexed. Each individual is exhorted by the same injunction, and commanded by the same authority, not only to “ abhor that which is evil,” but to “ cleave” likewise “ to that which is good ;” and to be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love.”

The corruption and infirmities of human nature, its proneness to sin, and its inclination to evil propensities, require no proof ; they are acknowledged, they are lamented. But as much of the intemperance of froward youth, and the licentiousness of maturer age, proceeds from the tuition of seductive vice ; or originates in a total defection of early correctives, by which the mind might have been enlightened, and the principles of honest industry and religious duties have been confirmed : As much of the misery observable in the metropolis may be traced



from the necessitous inability of parental succour, where indigence becomes more piteous from casual difficulties, and increasing depression ; the duties of Christianity should operate with augmenting force upon those who are appointed as almoners of God's more enlarged bounties ; and by whom neither want of ability nor want of opportunity can be pleaded in extenuation of disobedience to its laws. And since benevolence does not consist in slothful inclination, but is perfected by actual performance, without which we cannot be said to " cleave to that which is good ;" no plan should be left unpursued to alleviate the outward indications of poverty, by willing contribution ; or to remove the deplorable effects of inward darkness, by instruction, by admonition, by example.

Should the cold deliberations of prudential caution anticipate ensuing misery consequent of ignorance, and concomitant with depravity ; avarice itself, when guided by interest, would unbend and be charit-



able. But should the precepts of the Gospel invigorate the heart with the genuine feelings of compassion; generosity would become doubly generous in the cause of virtue, of industry, and of religion. Urged by the strongest affections of his nature; influenced by every motive of real tenderness; incited by attachment to his country, and warmed with the most fervent gratitude to his God, the true disciple of Christianity readily complies with the injunctions of his Redeemer, and hastens to afford some proof of his sincerity, and some test of his allegiance. He feeds the hungry, he clothes the naked, he instructs the ignorant, he reclaims the sinner, he is kindly affectioned to all his fellow-creatures in brotherly love. “He shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

Whatever difference may be supposed to exist between the prohibitions of the divine law, and its affirmative precepts; the latter requiring occasional circumstances for the performance of *good* actions, whilst the for-

mer demands an uniform and determinate resistance of *evil* ones; we cannot too seriously consider the effect of disobedience in either. And since the felicity of future glory is emphatically assigned to the merciful, “for they shall obtain mercy;” the sentence of final retribution should incite us to practical goodness, lest we attain not the promises made to the righteous, but participate in the award of the wicked. Our Saviour declares in his solemn illustration of that day, “inasmuch as ye did it *not* to “one of the least of *these*, ye did it *not* unto “*me*.” As ye did *not* administer to the indigent and afflicted upon earth, when your ability was more than equal to their wants; ye have not been faithful to your trust, neither can ye hope for the blessedness of Heaven.

Should it be objected, because the positive precept of the Apostle cannot be fully exercised in its unlimited implication, that the injunction is therefore vague and ineffective, it may be answered, that if it is simply interpreted of *moral good* in opposition

to *moral evil*, the obligation is universal, and always in force; “*cleave to that which is good.*” But if it is construed generally, as comprehending more active virtue, the compliance to the rule should not depend on capricious inclination, nor should it be restrained to those partial duties obligatory upon all men equally; since, from the disposition of temporal concerns, good works are more especially demanded of some, when occasion presents itself, and their ability will allow the performance of them. “As we have *opportunity*,” says the Apostle, “let us do good;”—and in his advice to Timothy, “charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good; that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”—In proportion therefore as our power is, should we embrace the opportunity of exercising the apostolical injunction; since by an heedless omission, or wilful neglect of such

occasions, we infringe upon a positive law, and become guilty. Nor is there any station in society, however subordinate, to which this duty does not in its proper application belong; and the inferior orders will do well to consider, that *they* are *not* exempt from the general maxim: for though it is declared, “that to whom much “is given, of him much will be required;” yet is it no less an inference of truth, that to whom little is given, of him something at least will be expected; so that the most accurate mode of compliance to the twofold obligation of the text is devised in one plan appropriated to the whole system of Christian duty; “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

As to the more exalted characters of life, to whom wisdom, and power, and affluence belong; great is their trust, and numerous the offices of kindness demanded at their hands. As *men* they cannot but have the feelings of men, and pity the calamities of the less fortunate children of their

country; as *Christians*, they are subject to the laws of Christianity, and are bound to obedience; but as *Stewards* of God's more immediate bounties, *they* have obligations exclusively their own. It is *theirs* "to deal bread to the hungry; and when they see the naked, to cover them."—It is *theirs* to "have compassion on the ignorant;" and to "open their hand *wide* unto the poor and needy in the land."—Nor are such objects of our regard infrequent or undeserving. Some private wretchedness may arrest our attention, some public institution may claim our support; and that heart must be insensible indeed, which is not warmed by the strong appeals of the afflicted. Travelling through the giddy maze of pleasureable enjoyments, some scene of woe must catch our eye; some humble fabric may present itself to our view; and, pleading the united cause of ignorance and poverty, may merit our attention, and deserve our support.

The age of compassion is by no means



past. Pity is interwoven in our nature; charity fostered with success: and where ability is joined to the moving principle of universal sympathy, the source of pleasure is endless; the joys of self-complacency are within our own power. The exquisite sensations of happiness in doing good cannot be described; they can only be felt. The wounded traveller, alive to all the genuine feelings of gratitude and of love, knew not the felicity experienced by the compassionate Samaritan.

A general and enlarged spirit of benevolence has long been the characteristic of our nation; our hospitals, our infirmaries, our public schools, and public charities, speak unbounded liberality; these shine with conspicuous lustre. Founded on the real basis of Christian love, may they flourish unsullied to the end of time! But whilst *these* blaze with lustre inconcealable, let us not forget those lesser brilliants of more humble institution, revolving in their smaller orbs, which though not so illustrious to



behold, have still their share of use. Let us not darken their diminished light !

If the happiness of man is best promoted by the exercise of industrious labour ; if piety and virtue are more increased by an early correction of vicious propensities ; if the honour of our Creator is best promoted by religious instruction, where ignorance *now* prevails ; we plead no *common cause* in soliciting your contributions for the stronger establishment of this lowly, though truly meritorious system of education. We urge no trifling appeal to our passions ; we adduce no frivolous pretext to extort the undeserved dole of your beneficence. We plead the cause of society, of religion, and of God.

As ye have hitherto stepped forward to support this parochial institution, founded in goodness, and established upon the principles of useful diligence ; an exhortation to perseverance on *my part* may be useless. Ye will doubtless anticipate all that can be

alleged. Ye will naturally foster those whom ye have adopted; ye will naturally protect those whom ye have hitherto cherished with your kindness; ye will not surely permit that good work to die through weakness, which ye yourselves have the means of renewing with more efficient health. Look forward with hope and confidence on what may *yet* be done; how many distressed objects of compassion may be rescued from the threshold of vice, and by your bounty become the children of virtue, and the favourites of Heaven. How many saved from the precipice of sin may become ornaments to society; and in *their turn*, be instrumental to *your* happiness. Cherish then, and encourage this humble, useful institution; join with hand and heart, in generosity, in zeal, in charity, to ensure the eternal welfare of these poor helpless, but much beloved objects of your heavenly Father; and save their souls alive.

Those of you to whom God hath been

merciful, been gracious, been bountiful, let your light shine before men in a suitable liberality; consider that it is from God alone, and his goodness, that ye are wealthy, that ye are happy.—As then “ ye have “ received freely, freely give.”

And Ye whose inclinations and kind wishes exceed the power of giving *largely*, willingly bestow your *little*; assured that God will accept your offering, and record the deed of your benevolence in the faithful register of Heaven.



SERMON XIII.

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TO THE

REV. FREDERICK WILLIAM BLOMBERG, M. A.

PREBENDARY OF BRISTOL,

*THIS DISCOURSE*

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AS

A TESTIMONY OF ESTEEM,

BY

HIS OBLIGED AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

*THE AUTHOR.*





## SERMON XIII.

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### PROVERBS xix. 21.

THERE ARE MANY DEVICES IN A MAN'S HEART; NEVERTHELESS, THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD, THAT SHALL STAND.

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TO believe in the existence of a Supreme and Almighty Being is the foundation of religion;—to confide in God, and regard his attributes with becoming humility and reverence, is a duty incumbent upon all, and essential to the happiness of mankind; whilst the doctrine of a superintending Providence forms the basis on which all our comfort in this world is fixed.—Without such belief,—without such confidence,—without such doctrine, there would be no consolation under affliction;—no hope in the time of calamity and distress;—prosperity would be regarded as the offspring of

chance; and adverse circumstances be accounted as the cruel result of absolute necessity.

But as it is not possible that unthinking matter should have casually fallen into that beautiful and stupendous arrangement appearing in the natural œconomy, which must be referred to some first intelligent cause or author who formed the universe with counsel and design, and still directs its motions by the operation of his will: so it is not to be imagined, that the omnipotent Creator of all things would set the creatures of his workmanship out of his power and controul;—would create, and then neglect them.—To leave mankind to the direction of chance, or to the impulse of mere necessity, would not be consistent with his goodness, his wisdom, or his power;—every thing proclaims the contrary. “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” He knoweth the concerns of men, and ruleth over all from the beginning.—He

continueth or suspendeth at his pleasure the use and application of our several faculties: He regardeth our transactions, and keepeth the direction of all things in his own hand: And as many instances occur to instruct and convince us, that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, such reflections naturally lead us to observe and acknowledge that superior power which guides and over-rules the motions of inferior agents, and directs them to the accomplishment of his designs; for though “there are many devices in a man’s heart, “the counsel of the Lord, *that* shall stand.”

The doctrine of a superintending Providence so clearly asserted in Holy Writ concurs with our own observation. The many unexpected returns and revolutions which have happened in the world teach us, that God is the judge; that He putteth down one, and setteth up another; that it is *He* who controuleth the power of the strong, the violent, and the fierce; and by his own authority maketh wars to cease in all the

world ; That it is He alone who “ breaketh  
 “ the bow, and knappeth the spear in sun-  
 “ der, and burneth the chariots in the fire.”  
 —It cannot, however, be reasonably sup-  
 posed that the interference of Providence  
 should be visible in every trivial circum-  
 stance and event, though the actions of  
 men are not at all times agreeable to the  
 divine will, and conformable to those up-  
 right laws which God has so graciously im-  
 parted to them.—A little reflection would  
 convince us that offences *will* come, and  
 many are the instances of wrong and vio-  
 lence prevailing over justice and equity ;  
 yet God so ruleth, as to keep the ultimate  
 disposal of all things to himself ; sometimes  
 of his wisdom restraining evil ; and at others  
 directing even our perverseness, so far as  
 He is pleased to suffer its activity, to fulfil  
 the gracious ends and purposes of his good-  
 ness.

The interposition of Providence not un-  
 frequently appears illustrious by a concur-  
 rence of extraordinary events, proving to

us in a more especial manner that the Lord looketh down from Heaven, and beholdeth the children of men ;—that from the habitation of his seat he considereth all them that dwell upon earth. And, from the unerring page of Scripture, we may adduce arguments sufficiently strong to support the doctrines of God's superintendence over the affairs of men, and indisputable proofs of his universal sovereignty.

We find by *his* all-powerful, over-ruling agency, that the virtuous Joseph was protected and rewarded; that the base and unnatural conduct of his brethren was finally productive of good.—Contrary to all human expectation, Joseph was led to advancement, to distinction, and to honour.—The favour of the Lord was upon him; his watchful providence guarded him on every side; so that in the time of scarcity and dearth he preserved the land of Egypt from famine; and, through the mercies of God, he saved the lives of thousands “by a great deliverance.”

It is recorded in Holy Writ, that the Assyrians, a bold, intrepid nation, were used as a rod to scourge a sinful and disobedient people.—Whilst *they* thought only to serve the purposes of ambition and avarice, striving to aggrandise themselves by the total ruin of their enemies, *God* over-ruled their enterprises to his own glory, and the service of religion. He made their restless activity and inhuman ravages instrumental to promote those ends of Divine counsel, which they themselves never intended, or strived impiously to defeat. But this gave no sanction to the wickedness and enormity of their proceedings. It proved, on the contrary, the more efficient wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being thus carrying his judgments into execution, and out of *evil* intentions producing *good* effects. For, “when the judgments of the Lord are on the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.”

Should we consider the melancholy fate of Jerusalem, that once illustrious city, the



pride of the Jewish nation ; should we reflect upon the horrors of its long protracted siege—the final overthrow of its palaces, its temples, and all its magnificence ;—should we meditate upon the causes which produced such devastation and indescribable horrors ; the recording annals of truth will inform us, that such inhuman ravages proceeded from unrestrained passions ; that such an extremity of misery was effected by an extremity of wickedness drawing down the vengeance of an insulted God upon an unbelieving and rebellious people. —History, like the faithful mirror, presents the picture of wretchedness, undissembled and without fiction.—Caution, as a guardian angel watching the steps of wavering irresolution, forewarns of danger ;—whilst Prudence, holding forth the example of former times, teaches us to avoid the crimes of the abandoned Jews, as the best adopted means of averting those heavy judgments which seem even now to hang over our own heads.

If the page of Scripture recites to us so

many instances of Divine wrath being poured out upon guilty nations and unrepenting crime, surely we should be taught and convinced, that, though the actions of men may seem for the present to be disregarded, yet downfall and destruction, wretchedness and misery, are the certain consequences of protracted iniquity.—‘The Most High God is the governor.—The Lord increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. And at what instant He speaketh concerning a nation or a kingdom, to build and to plant it, or to pluck up, and pull down, and destroy it,—it shall be done:—for his dominion is an everlasting dominion. “The counsel of “the Lord, *that* shall stand.”

When calm reflection takes place of thoughtlessness, and inconsiderate folly gives way to mature deliberation;—when the certain consequences of sin and impiety are weighed in the scale of reason and sound judgment;—when every action of man is

represented as passing under the immediate inspection of an omniscient, omnipotent Being, who knoweth the very secrets of the heart, and will not permit wickedness to go unpunished: in these circumstances, the veil of deceit is torn from the infatuating semblance of pleasure, and guilt alone is developed under mask of deceitful enjoyment.—When serious thought supersedes the carelessness of inadvertent action, the mind is struck with horror and remorse, we become terrified and alarmed. The religious sentiment approaches with energy and truth, and impels us to a sense of our duty. . Our passions subside; they are corrected by the prevailing voice of reason; they are persuaded by more judicious discernment. The entanglements of external seductions are destroyed by the powers of internal conviction; and obedience to the Divine will is enforced by the strongest motive of self-preservation. In this view of things, we perceive the necessity of a superintending Providence to protect us;—and we cannot but descry the wonderful

efficacy of religious principles in controuling our unruly desires, and guiding us in the way to happiness.

Without a sense of religion, wretched would be the state of the world.—Man, giving way to the fury of his passions, unchecked by any principles of religious fear, or regardless of any motives of religious expectation, would become wild and frantic; despising authority, and acknowledging no law but the dictates of his own capricious will.—Without a due sense of religion,—without the dread of future punishment, or the hopes of future reward, man would become fierce, headstrong, and unruly.—Human laws could not bind him;—no social compact would be able to controul his licentiousness;—no government could restrain the impetuosity of his temper.

Religion steps in aid of human policy.—Religion reforms the heart, and subdues, by its mildness, the wild ferocity of uncorrected nature. The vicious propensities of

men are softened by the principles of Christianity, and the happiness of society maintained.—The belief of a Supreme and Almighty Being, who takes cognizance of all our actions,—the hopes of his favour and the dread of his vengeance, act forcibly upon the mind, and give an authoritative sanction to human ordinances and laws.—Where other arguments will not prevail to the counteracting the sallies of intemperate passion; where persuasion will not invite, and human coercion becomes ineffectual, the strong impressions of Divine anger will operate with irresistible force: they alarm every faculty of the soul,—they evince the necessity of obedience,—they compel men to consider, and to repent:—“Knowing the  
“ terrors of the Lord, (says St. Paul) we  
“ persuade men.”

Man, in his best estate, is but weak-sighted and ignorant;—the times and seasons are hid from his eyes;—the ways of Providence he cannot foresee;—he knoweth not the events of futurity. Observation

must guide him; history must inform him;—and Scripture truths will assure him, that human skill, unattended by Divine blessing, is frail, uncertain, unstable;—that though the heathen may make much ado, and the kingdoms be in great commotion, yet, when God uttereth his voice, the very earth shall melt away, and all the world shall keep silence before him.—When men, therefore, blinded by the thickest film of lawless passion; rioting in every excess of licentiousness and blasphemy, despising the energy of Divine truth; ridiculing the authority of revelation, and priding themselves upon the sufficiency of *natural reason* to enlighten and direct them;—when men, thus uncontrouled by the principles of religion, seek to spread desolation and waste, and bring destruction upon earth;—*it may be*, God uses them as instruments for the scourge of vice, or for the exercise of virtue; to pull down the pride of the people—to correct their enormities—to punish their prevailing crimes—to recall them to repentance; and, in the end, more effectually



ally to promote the tranquillity of mankind. *It may be*, that the melancholy protraction of war, and the present too gloomy aspect of affairs, are intended to fulfil some part of those prophecies which *must* be completed, to purify and establish Christianity upon the broad basis of the Gospel; free from the errors of delusive fancy, and unshackled by the fetters of gloomy superstition.—Doubtless, however, these things must teach and convince all nations that God is judge alone; that He alone hath power to help and to cast down; to save and destroy: in famine He can redeem from death; and in war from the peril of the sword.

The consideration of God's sovereignty, both in a temporal and in a spiritual point of view, affords the pleasing satisfaction of consolatory hope in the period of danger and distress. It teaches us to cast our care upon *Him* who, in his goodness, never ceases to care for those who love him; it impels us in the time of public calamity to call upon him faithfully, being assured,

that He is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. If we are careful to discharge the duties which he requires of us;—if we are grateful for the mercies we have received at his hands;—if we attend his ordinances, reverence his sabbaths, and duly acknowledge the wonderful acts of his providential care; we may assure ourselves of his protection, and with humble confidence look for safety and success. We may trust that *He* who ruleth the raging of the sea, will also, in his good time, quell and subdue the hostile disposition of those who seek our destruction;—and, by his Almighty power, preserve us from every effort of our enemy, and secure to us the blessings of returning peace.

The bounty of Providence to this nation has been great. Separately to recount the various acts of his goodness, Volumes must be filled;—but, to *benefit* by them, *deserve* them and be *thankful*. Ascribe them not to the arm of flesh, nor to those instru-

ments which God is pleased to use for the effecting of his designs; but let the hand which guides them have the glory. Though much praise and commendation may be due to human counsels and commands, yet should the ultimate of all be ever referred to the Supreme Director. Let our acknowledgments be unto *Him*, that, among all the misery and trouble which we suffer in this deplorable state of warfare, we are not utterly destroyed; for it is *He* that saveth us from our enemies, and putteth them to confusion that hate us.

—The consideration of God's providence and sovereignty should likewise teach us humility and gratitude; should incite us to rely upon his will; to pray unto him and adore his goodness; to bear our afflictions with resignation, and our prosperity without vaunting. The consideration of his former kindness to us should teach us fidelity to our country and loyalty to our king; —to despise the schemes of innovators, and pray for the preservation and welfare of our

Constitution.—And here it may be observed, that the misery consequent upon *innovation* has generally exceeded all that the boldest projector at first designed, or could have anticipated. Where the fanciful innovators of long experienced and well-approved systems, either civil or religious, have been permitted to introduce speculative theories into practice—riot, bloodshed, and confusion, have ensued. Property has become the sport of faction; safety no where to be found.—Neither youth, nor age, nor sex, have been free from the horrid barbarity of assailants.—Irreligion has erected her standard; and every thing sacred and divine has been distorted—profaned—and blasphemed.

The truth of this observation must be evident to every man of reason and reflection:—we are not wanting of historic testimony to evince the truth of the assertion. We have had the dismal picture of violent and quick transition from one extreme to another, equally inconsistent with

the happiness of the people.—We have had a fatal example, by which we ought to take serious warning ; and know, that *liberty, unrestrained*, soon becomes licentiousness,—licentiousness passes into anarchy—and anarchy is at last succeeded by the most confirmed and despotic tyranny. An example of this kind should convince us of the danger and miseries consequent of restlessness, and a wavering spirit ; and of what importance it is to us, to quiet the minds of the deluded and dissatisfied, by arguments of lenity and moderation, rather than kindle the flame of contention by cowardly insinuations and murmurs against government.

To enter into political discussion in this place is unnecessary and unbecoming,—it is not my inclination, neither is it my duty.—But a few general reflections at this important crisis may be effective of some good ;—and I hope they will be received as the dictates of an unprejudiced mind.

War is a kind of solemn appeal to the supreme Judge of the world, in cases where human arbitrations prove ineffectual. A state of warfare must always produce evil ; and to aver the contrary would be uttering a false assertion. It must at all times bring with it dismal effects. Reason affirms it,—experience testifies the truth of it. The operations of war are melancholy, deplorable, wretched. Even though the event may be successful to us, yet the ravages of protracted hostility are direful and calamitous. War (the scourge of mankind, the sore judgment of an offended God) never fails to open a field of horror and confusion ; it arouses our most tender compassion for the miseries of our fellow-creatures. But should Providence, insulted at the continuation of accumulating iniquities, determine against us, what more dreadful image of human woe can we possibly suppose, than that train of abandoned viciousness which may ultimately ensue ? Your own thoughts may represent to you what no language can express—the desolating fury of an



enraged and impetuous foe, grasping the sword of extirpating resentment;—unmoved by the dictates of humanity—regardless of principle, and relentless in atrocious fury. Our danger has been great; great have been our exertions, and wonderful our deliverance. Hitherto we have escaped the fury of the Host.

Threats of extirpation are melancholy to consider. A relentless enemy, determined upon our utter ruin, cannot be successfully resisted without unanimity on our side;—without great and voluntary sacrifices, personal exertion, and zealous activity. These things are necessary for our preservation; they are still needful, as the means of counteracting force; they are essential to the maintaining our freedom, our laws, our religion,—nay, even our existence as a *happy* nation. The hardships we at present sustain may indeed be accounted great; but the contest is become the result of necessity, not of will. In such a cause, though great are our difficulties, yet glorious is the con-

flict. We are contending for all that is dear and precious to us, as men and as Britons. And is not comparative evil better than superlative misery?—Is it not more prudent, will it not be more wise, to be patient under a known and temporary hardship, rather than foolishly draw upon ourselves the horrors of an invasion, by secret conspiracies, disloyalty to the best of Monarchs, and injudicious ill-founded complaints against the ruling powers?—Should we not, rather, fired with a becoming resentment, warmed with patriotism, and zealous for our own domestic happiness, resolutely strive to overcome?—Should we not, with promptitude and alacrity, step forward as one man, subduing the spirit of party; firmly uniting, in one bond of unity among ourselves, and attachment to our government, contend for our lives, our property, our religion, our families, our country?—Reason would suggest the propriety of action—self-preservation enforces the necessity of resistance.

In different stations, men have different wants; their sentiments are not always congenial, nor do their manners accord; custom and education have fixed and reconciled different modes of living: Each class of men, therefore, according to this distinction, must feel its proportion of burthen when the country claims its aid.

In the humbler walks of life, we have comforts unknown to the rich.—The glittering pomp of their retinue may fascinate, and tempt us to be discontented with our own station, and wish ourselves as them.—But, consider their *trouble* also!—Who envieth the monarch awakened from his pillow by the horrid din of war, or the murmurs of a dissatisfied people?—Who seeketh the dizzy precipice of danger, when the broad path of safety is close at his feet?—Who would not prefer the wholesome bread of industry to the luxuries of the rich, surrounded with anxiety and the never-ceasing toils of office? As there are many members in the Body-Natural, so must there

be also in the Body-Politic;—subordination is necessary to the well-being of society :—niceties should not be too minutely considered, nor trifles investigated with precision and malice. To look upon the higher circles as totally divested of care, and encircled only with pleasure, is folly. To envy their external prosperity, produces discontent; and discontent necessarily destroys every kind of happiness, by rendering us unfit properly to enjoy those blessings which Providence bestows upon each of us.

If the present hour appeareth dismal, patience will effect what complaining can never bring to pass; since to the gloomy and desponding temper, the sun, however bright, will not appear cheerful, whilst the smallest glimpse of his ray will enliven the prospect of the less melancholy. Should the present state of things press hard upon us, and prove grievous, fretfulness will not bring relief; disloyalty and disturbance will increase our danger. The consequences of

disunion and despondency should be reflected upon; party animosities should subside; jealousies no longer subsist; sedition be done away. The timely use of strenuous exertions should be considered; and the absolute necessity we are under, however great our present difficulty, of resolutely stepping 'forth, and firmly protecting ourselves against every contingent calamity.

Whatever will tend to alienate the affections of the Subject from the Sovereign, or to introduce discord and confusion in the State, should be discountenanced, rejected, and abhorred. Whatever will divert animosities and dissension, or promote the harmony and welfare of society, should be studied with diligence, persevered in with steadiness, and encouraged by reward. And as we value our happiness as men—or our freedom as Britons, wisdom will dictate a quiet submission to any trifling existing inconveniences, rather than hazard the overthrow of a settled and much-admired form of government, by seditious and tumultuary

opposition. Prudence will instruct us to bear them with patience and fortitude, till they can be remedied without danger.

It behoves us, then, individually, to keep these considerations in view, to counter-balance the too *fashionable doctrines of the day*, and to overcome the power of that specious fatal principle, the *zeal for liberty*; which, if received and cherished, will betray us unwarily into excesses which we shall in vain lament and deplore.

By the blessings of Providence, by the power of an Almighty superintending Agent, we still continue firm and strong, amidst all the storms and tempests which howl around us. We have a King, whose private virtues deserve our closest imitation, and whose public conduct merits the confidence of his people. We have a Constitution so much to be revered, as, with all its alleged imperfections, deserves our most active energy to defend, and every effort of an Englishman to support; un-



sullied by the mischievous animosities of party, and invulnerable to the devices of our enemy:—and, if we remain *true to ourselves*, our strength will be increased, and our firmness become more firm.

The experience we have had of *His* goodness, who both *hath* delivered, and *doth* deliver, leads us on still to trust that He *will* deliver us. *This* should inspire us with courage in the day of adversity, and animate us with true and noble fortitude under all our distresses. *This* should encourage us to bear our present afflictions with patience and resignation; not murmuring against government, speaking evil of dignities, and repining at Providence: but rather fervently to beseech God, that, of His good pleasure, He would consider our wretchedness, and pity us. That He would defeat the machinations of our enemies;—eradicate all seeds of dissension;—bless every overture of reconciliation; and spread abroad throughout all nations

upon earth the conciliatory precepts of the Gospel.

Be, therefore, unanimous among yourselves—loyal to your Sovereign—obedient to your superiors—and dutiful to your God. Trust in the Lord, that He may deliver us. Deprecate His Wrath; supplicate His Mercy; be thankful for every act of his Goodness. Pray unto Him faithfully, with one heart and one voice, that He would command the reeking sword of war no longer to riot in destruction, but say unto it—*Be thou sheathed for ever!* Trust in the Lord, and fervently implore Him to restore unto us the blessings of PEACE;—that national happiness may again revive and flourish; that plenty may dwell in our land; that our hearts may be gladdened with joy; and that the shouts of thanksgiving may be heard in our streets.

FINIS.

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